

LARGE PARTS of Sekhukhune-land have been occupied by massive contingents of SADF soldiers, SA and Lebowa police.

Youth have been forced to flee their villages and are living in the mountains. Activists say the area is in a virtual state of civil war.

Security forces moved into the area in the wake of deepening cracks in SA's Lebowa bantustan rule.

A meeting organised recently by the Sekhukhune-land Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) called on Lebowa MP's and those serving in tribal authority structures to quit.

At least eight Lebowa tribal authority chiefs, three of them Lebowa MP's from Manganeng, GaMasha and Skunoord have resigned and pledged support for progressive organisations.

Growing resistance in the area is developing into outright rejection of tribal authorities and Lebowa. "People are seeing chiefs as part and parcel of Apartheid rule, enriching themselves at the expense of starving millions", said one activist.

"They help implement influx control and regulate the flow of cheap labour from the bantustan rural areas to the factories and mines.

"And they are part of the central government security network. Some landed many comrades in jail or were responsible for their deaths", said a Burgersfort activist.

The SPCC meeting also demanded all troops get out of the villages. Parents were urged to tell their sons to resign from bantustan armed forces. A petition is to be launched to get all newspapers to report on police brutality and other events there in the area.

Police shootings have led to a cycle of funerals. Scores of people have been detained. Others have disappeared or been forced into hiding. Regular police and SADF raids

Lebowa: a call to organise every person



have forced many youths to make the mountains their homes.

Activists say police action has mobilised people. Progressive organisations are rapidly gaining support and have played a key role in cracking bantustan structures.

Village youth congresses have sprung up all over the place and are linking up in the Sekhukhune-land Youth Organisation (Seyo). Some Seyo village committees are starting to function as governing structures in the villages. And Seyo is helping set up youth structures where none exist.

"The call in the villages is to organise every person. Because those who are not with us can be used against the people", said a youth activist.

In March, youth from Apel, GaNkwane, Nchabeleng, Mohlaletse and neighbouring areas marched on the police station demanding that detainees be released. But before they got there SADF, SAP and LP confronted them.



Many have been badly beaten by Lebowa police

Many were badly beaten. Others escaped and hid in the mountains until teargas forced them out. Hundreds were arrested but released because police cells were already full.

Massive contingents of security forces in convoys of hippos still move around the area as SADF helicopters hover above.

There are numerous Parents Crisis Committees, and they have begun to grow into civics organising people around their problems.

Conditions in the Northern Transvaal are bad. Water is scarce, land is arid and mostly owned by chiefs or Lebowa. Villagers find it almost impossible to scratch a living from the unarable land available to ordinary people. Housing is inadequate and most people build houses themselves, many of them mud.

"People here want land", said a village committee organiser. "At the moment a tiny minority owns and controls the land. So the call is that the land shall be shared among

those who work it, even where people don't yet know this is what the Freedom Charter says".

Local jobs are scarce but people are trapped in the villages by influx control laws. Chiefs act as labour recruiting officers. And they misuse traditional laws to force villagers to pay tribal taxes and work for them for free.

Schools are inadequate and overcrowded with few qualified teachers. Many students have to travel long distances, often on foot, to get to school. And their demands around SRC's and other issues often meet a stone wall.

Organisations still face the challenge of overcoming tribalism and the belief in witchcraft.

"People pray and go to so-called witches to seek relief from their suffering", said an activist in the area. "Our task is not only to expose the source of the suffering — the exploitation and oppression of the Apartheid system — but also how to eliminate the source".

In Strydkraal conflict over land and control of a school took on tribal overtones. During the clashes Seyo member Solomon Maditse was shot dead by police.

Seyo branches, including Strydkraal, Masemola, Lobspruit, Magnet Heights, Jane Furse, Apel, Mohlaletse, Nkoana, Nchabeleng and GaNkwane youth organisations met to discuss the problem and solved the conflict. Families and students who had fled the area returned.

In March another youth activist, Lukas was shot after police disrupted a youth meeting in Skunoord. Mourners returning from Lukas' funeral were beaten up. Some of those beaten, from Tswaing were beaten again on their way to Groothoek hospital the next day. Six were arrested and two who had been seriously injured at the funeral were allowed to go to hospital.

Youth, workers are working together

POLICE REPRESSION won't quench our thirst for freedom, says the Steelpoort Youth Congress (Steyco). "We will fight till the end".

Since last year people in Steelpoort, Sekhukhune-land, have been hit by widespread beatings, banning of meetings and arrests.

The recently formed Steelpoort Civic Association (Steca) says they will fight alongside youth and other progressive organisations.

Village and township youth structures are mushrooming. Eerstegeluk, Stocking, GaPasha, GaMampuru, Mangabane have Steyco branches working closely with Driekop, Maandagshoek and Praktiseer youth congresses.

Youth activities have included:
● 'Operation Clean-ups' — clean-

ing the township.
● Workshops and meetings with political discussions.

● Helping set up democratic SRC's in the schools.

● Mobilising support for the Metal Box can boycott.

● Encouraging chiefs to resign from Lebowa Tribal Authorities.

Workers and youth work hand in hand. Many people are both members of Steyco and shopstewards or members of Cosatu affiliated unions.

The Steelpoort Action Committee — two representatives each from the unions, Steyco, Steca, students and the Steelpoort Women's League — coordinates activity.

Police invasions often send youth fleeing to the mountains and bushes. Attacks fuelled an 'isolate police' campaign throughout

Sekhukhune-land, including Jane Furse and Steelpoort areas.

Police are banned from shebeens, shops, churches, sports clubs, taxi's and other public transport. "Now they only use their police vans and hippos for transport", said one activist. Police tried to trick shopowners into serving them.

They said a Steyco leader had said they could be served. When this failed they allegedly threatened the shopowners.

In Eerstegeluk, youth and other resident workers are fighting the Tobatse Ferrochrome mining company bosses who own the township.

After water cuts and electricity blackouts residents demanded the company cut rents and improve the

water supply.

Since December last year they have boycotted the local community centre, demanding:

● Management should stop police from coming into the township.

● the centre should be run by residents.

● workers fired during conflicts around the centre should be reinstated.

Workers say they pay compulsory subscriptions to the centre but it is not being used in the people's interests. They say the centre should be controlled by the community, not by Ferrochrome management.

Steyco says the centre is 'exploitation disguised as leisure'. Eleven Steyco members were arrested and charged after police disrupted a demonstration on the centre in November last year.

More arrests and charges followed. When all the cases came up one day in February, there was a total work stayaway. People went in every car, bus and combi to demonstrate at the Lydenburg regional court. The accused were granted bail.

In late March meetings in Sekhukhune-land were banned. But, youth activists said "no self-respecting people listen to the Lebowa radio", so they didn't know about the ban.

As the youth gathered for a Steyco meeting in Driekop, police arrived, sjambokking people. Six people were arrested.

Five were released on bail, but one, Juice Mojalefa, was refused bail. This sparked off a school boycott with students demanding Mojalefa's release. Later Ummawosa branch executive members and organiser Daniel Makhubu were badly beaten up.

In Praktiseer GaPasha villagers went to tell the chief, Lebowa Minister of Agriculture and Fores-

try, R.P.Pasha, their complaints — women work long hours for the chief but get no food or pay. There is a lack of water and no clinic in the village.

People were angered when money they paid the chief was used to build a Tribal Authority building instead of a clinic.

One evening the youth were singing freedom songs. The Chief called the police. Six youth were shot and five were arrested. The next day eight more people were arrested.

But not all Chiefs work with the police. Chief Mampuru and his people were forcibly removed from near Groblersdal and dumped near Steelpoort. He allows meetings and is opposed to some of the action of the police.

Last month John Mamosodi (15) was allegedly shot by a white farmer at GaPasha. Youth burnt farmers' cars in retaliation. They allege farmers work hand in hand with the SADF and police.

Cases of police action in the area during March include:

● On June 16 last year police tried to disrupt a Steyco workshop of over 800 people. The next day they invaded the area, arresting Steyco leader Korro Manella.

● On Good Friday police surrounded youth in Eerstegeluk preparing for a funeral in Jane Furse. Funeral pamphlets, UDF and Steyco banners were seized.

● In Manganeng, police disrupted a youth meeting on March 13 and beat people in the village. Five were arrested and charged.

● In-Leoreleng, youth decided to join the can boycott in support of striking Metal Box workers. They negotiated with shopowners and lodges and gave them two weeks notice to remove and stop selling cans. In late March they were checking if owners had stuck to plan. Police arrived and beat people.



Breaking down one of the houses of more than 80 families forcibly removed from Uitvlugh village. Moutse, to Immerpan. The Uitvlugh youth congress (UYOCO) condemned the removals saying villagers had lived there for more than 20 years and are resisting the move. They said government officials paid some individuals to recruit more people to move to Immerpan and were trying to

smear UYOCO's name. There has been serious police harassment in the area and petrol bomb attacks on UYOCO leaders homes. Uitvlugh strongly resisted the incorporation of Moutse into KwaNdebele earlier this year. People from Naganeng near Kgabokwane are also being moved.