



Seyco members - allegedly assaulted by the police

All-out war in Seshego

AN A-TEAM vigilante squad have launched an all-out war against progressive organisations in Seshego.

Widespread and brutal assaults, death threats, mass detentions and allegations of torture and hit squads are rife.

Key targets have been progressive organisations like the UDF affiliated Seshego Youth Congress (Seyco) and their members.

Victims and other residents allege the A-team have approval from the top. A Seyco leader said the Lebowa government felt threatened by growing support for progressive organisations in its home base, Seshego. But police brutality is mobilising residents against Lebowa and the bantustan system, he said.

Seyco is demanding police move out of the township and has called on councillors and Lebowa MP's to resign.

Uniformed and plainclothes LP have allegedly carried out the attacks. Victims say they know some of the policemen involved.

The reign of terror intensified in early March after police disrupted a meeting to form a Parents Crisis Committee at the Lutheran Church Centre. Many were injured and about 40 people were detained.

There have been at least three petrol bomb attacks on activists houses.

In the past month police have twice disrupted Steyco activities — once during a campaign to clean graveyards and later while youth were building a Mandela park.

The first attack was despite an agreement from high ranking police officials that police wouldn't interfere. Teargas, bullets, birdshot and sjamboks flew. At least three people were shot and many severely beaten. More than 60 people, among them children, were detained and held for a week.

Five youth, including Seyco members were captured by police and taken to an isolated area.

Two managed to escape, but the remaining three were repeatedly assaulted for about an hour. Among them was Billy Ledwaba, who is partly paralysed.

According to Steyco the LP "parade as comrades and give people lifts. They put UDF posters on their combi and play music so people don't suspect they are police. They talk politics and when people respond they get beaten".

One local businessman allegedly hired a hitman and promised to pay him R2000 to kill Seyco president, Patrick Phintsa.

Seyco said the businessman is a well-known puppet in the area and has long been working with the system. Residents are now boycotting his businesses and his car was burnt down. Three police houses in the township have also been burnt down.

Lutheran churchman Timothy Chere said he has had numerous death threats and his home was chemical bombed. Last year an anonymous pamphlet called for his 'total and immediate elimination through any method' by the 31 December. He also had information that police tried to hire a hitman from Tembisa to kill him.

The church has condemned the attacks saying violence begets violence. "No solution to the political crisis can come through violence, especially when it is perpetrated by those who claim to be enforcing law and order".

As the reign of terror continues, Seyco said they have support from the vast majority of Seshego youth and the older people are behind them. Seyco area committees are being set up in surrounding villages.

Renegades' reign of terror is challenged

MOZAMBICAN and Zimbabwean renegades are terrorising residents in townships near Phalaborwa in the Northern Transvaal.

Residents say they were responsible for two recent hand grenade attacks in which eight people were killed.

The first grenade attack, in Namakgale, was on the hotel complex of Namakgale Parents Crisis Committee (NPCC) member, Jackson Mogodi. One youth was killed and several people injured.

Four days later, on Good Friday, seven people were killed in an explosion in a shebeen in nearby Lulekani, Gazankulu.

The Northern Transvaal UDF condemned the attack and has demanded the renegades be handed over to their respective governments. UDF affiliates in the area have appealed to 'all organisations in the liberation struggle to expose these filthy deeds'.

Activists say the renegades were black soldiers who fought against liberation movements and fled after their countries won independence. They came to Phalaborwa and were assisted by the SADF.

They sometimes wear military uniforms and local residents say they work with Lebowa and SA police in trying to crush progressive organisations.

They speak Shangaan and Portuguese, drive around in luxury cars and have lots of money. "These terrorists are paid huge salaries for

destabilising the neighbouring states", said one activist.

"They used their blood money to buy women and liquor. When they are drunk they even boast about their dirty work".

Feared and hated by Namakgale and Lulekani residents they are reported to be living in Skiet Tocht near Phalaborwa.

"They used to attack people in shebeens and even in the street, moving around armed with all sorts of weapons.

"Every weekend there were fights. People were murdered. But the authorities turned a blind eye".

"These terrorists were the monarchs of all they survey. The money was flowing, especially after every mission of massacre into the neighbouring states".

But last year progressive organisations began to grow in the Phalaborwa area. The reign of terror of the bandits and their masters was challenged.

Youth Congresses supporting the UDF were formed in Namakgale (Nayco), Mashishimale (Mayco) and Lulekani (Luyco) and later Parents Crisis Committees in Namakgale and Lulekani.

Mine and other workers formed trade unions and joined forces with youth and other residents.

But as organisations grew, so did repression from the bandits, the SADF, SA and Lebowa police.

Since January at least 12 people have been killed and hundreds of others injured and arrested.

UDF and youth congress activists

outlined some of the events:

● On January 15 police fired teargas, rubber bullets and birdshot at a meeting of Phalaborwa Mining Company workers (NUM members). Youth, students and workers fought police and barricaded all entrances to the township. Jack Kgwedi was shot dead by police.

● Students demanding SRCs were attacked by police. Many were detained and others allegedly assaulted and raped. This sparked off a two week stayaway from school.

● A policeman shot dead worker Maruping Elvis Setagane on March 8.

● On March 14 police opened fire on people returning to Namakgale from a night vigil. As people fled, a car of bandits drove past and shot dead Nayco member Malope.

● On Sunday, March 23, police invaded a Nayco meeting in the Namakgale Lutheran church. Police and bandits armed with guns and sjamboks surrounded the area.

Teargas and bullets were fired and fleeing youth were beaten.

Sixteen year old student Mavis Malatjie was shot dead. Scores were wounded and 29 were arrested.

Battles raged into the night. Angry youth burnt down two policemen's houses and stoned another. A bandit died when his car collided after youth stoned it.

Groups of bandits drove around hunting youth. At about 9pm they went to Mogodi's hotel. They started shooting at people and threw a handgrenade into the hotel foyer.

Shiluvane Youth Congress member, Aaron Mhalangu, was killed and many others injured. That evening, SADF helicopters hovered above the township still hunting youth.

● On Wednesday, March 26, police detained NPCC members Mogodi and Mgata. NUM leader is detained from Mogodi's house in Lulekani. He was one of 27 workers dismissed from the Foskor mine earlier.

● Good Friday, March 28, becomes a black Friday.

Among people sitting drinking at a Lulekani shebeen were some bandits. Activists said they usually parked their cars inside the yard, but that evening they were parked outside.

"The shebeen owner was giving them VIP treatment as they meant money to him", said one youth activist. "People drinking were not aware that death was lurking".

The bandits had said the people of Lulekani were against them. Later in the evening they left with their girlfriends.

One threw a hand-grenade onto the veranda where people were sitting. Five young men were killed instantly and two died before they could get to the nearest hospital. Eleven people were injured. One of the dead, Joe Shemane, had been beaten up by bandits the week before. The others who died were Shemane, Vincent Mathebula, Johannes 'Ken' Mabunda, Cliff Masuku, Solane Mashaba, Jonas Mabondza and Narbod Mahlale.

"This merciless death by these terrorists cast a heavy shadow over the whole township of Lulekani", said Nayco statement.

Villages are uniting

A RECENT hand grenade attack victim in Namakgale was recovering from a bullet wound at the time of his death.

Shiluvane Youth Congress (Syco) leaders said Aaron Mhalangu, a Syco member, had been shot in the head on March 22 when Lebowa police opened fire on youths singing freedom songs.

After seeing a doctor Aaron and friends went to Namakgale hotel for food. He was killed instantly when a grenade hit the hotel.

Thousands attended his funeral at Mahwibidung village, where there is a Syco village committee. Syco was formed in July 1985 and now has more than nine village committees.

In Burgersdorp, another village organised by Syco, villagers are protesting against the local chief. They said he took R400 bail money they collected and he won't return it.

The Muhlaba Youth Congress (Muyo) has area committees in

more than seven villages nearby.

Recently youth were singing freedom songs when the chief, Gazankulu MP S.M. Muhlaba, called the police. More than 30 youth were arrested and others are in hiding.

Parents, students and youth who went to court to see them were turned away. The youth were refused bail, allegedly on instructions from the chief. Students at Mpumulana High School came out on boycott saying they won't attend classes until their colleagues are released. And villagers are calling on the chief to account for why he called in the police.

'Isolating' SAP violence

POLICE have retaliated violently against being banned from hotels and shebeens in Mahwelereng. The ban is part of the 'isolate police' campaign in the Northern Transvaal.

The Mahwelereng Youth Congress (Mayco) alleges police fired teargas and shot at people leaving a hotel one night near the end of March.

"They went on the rampage in the streets injuring many people and raiding shebeens", said Mayco.

In the next days police allegedly destroyed Mandela Park, Oliver Tambo Park and Biko Park which the youth had built. Boards with the Communist Party hammer and sickle were confiscated.

SADF, SAP and Lebowa police raided houses, sjambokking people and detaining more than 40, many of them Mayco members. People wearing Release Mandela t-shirts were forced to burn them and were allegedly beaten. Detainees were forced to help destroy parks, told to shout 'Viva SAP' and call Mandela to help them.

Youth attacked policemen's houses, burning government offices and Lebowa Education Minister S.P. Kwakwa's car.

A police roadblock tried to stop local delegates to the Durban National Education Crisis Conference.

Mayco condemned the police action and demanded troops get out of their township. "These people know nothing about law and order, only how to perpetuate violence and disorder", said a Mayco statement.