

South Africa

The information below is based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Final Report, issued on 21 March 2003¹

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Chapter 3:

115 Cases of sexual torture included forcing detainees (both male and female) to undress; the deliberate targeting of genitals or breasts during torture; the threat of and, in some instances, actual rape of detainees (male and female); the insertion of objects such as batons or pistols into bodily orifices and placing detainees overnight in cells with common-law prisoners known to rape new-comers. Ms Ntombizanele Zingxondo [CT00860/BEA] testified:

They unbuttoned my shirt, and pulled my breast out of my bra. They emp- tied one drawer and my breast was squeezed in the drawer. They did this several times on each breast until white sticky stuff burst out of the nipples of my breast.

One evening while I was sleeping, a white policeman was opening the doors ... he was alone. He pulled the blankets off me – ordered me to take off my clothes. I refused and we struggled ... I kept on yelling ... The policeman let go, then ... left.

116 Fourteen-year-old Patrick Mzathi [CT06108/GEO] experienced the male version of the drawer method: “They put my penis and my testicles into a drawer, it was the first time I experienced a pain of my private parts. I went unconscious.”

156 Mr Michael Gumede told the court that police had hit him, put stones in his shoes and made him stand on tiptoe, and tied a brick around his testicles and threatened to continue torturing him until he confessed to having been recruited for military training.

200 Mr Christo Nel [AM6609/97] applied for amnesty in respect of the detention and torture of a detainee in Durban in 1984/5. The victim was made to remove his clothes and to climb onto a table. He was held down by Nel and an unidentified medical practitioner inserted his finger into the victim’s anus while he was questioned.

202 Lengene was abducted from Botswana, and, after being rendered unconscious, taken to a garage where he was left naked and handcuffed to a table. He was then taken to what he believed to be a farmhouse belonging to Coetzee’s father-in-law. He was interrogated for six days, during which time he was given electric shocks to his genitals, beaten with a hosepipe and kept naked and without blankets. At some point Coetzee’s father-in-law came in with a pair of pliers and told the Security Branch officers interrogating them that they were wasting their time. “He just took hold of my penis with a plier. He said, ‘Willem, take this and cut the fucking penis with a plier, he will tell you the truth’. They just kept on laughing while I was grieving with pain.”

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¹ Full text available [here](#)

173 Mr Gordon Moshoeu [CT02913/OUT] was detained for four years and was tortured in Quatro camp from 1981 to 1984, accused of being an ‘enemy agent’. He lost his teeth and was scarred in the process. He names several persons who were allegedly involved in his torture which included having wild chillies smeared “on his private parts and anus” in Quatro camp in 1981. [...]

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Chapter 2:

24 The Human Rights Commission (HRC) records the death of detainee, Mr Mthayeni Cuthsela, in Pondoland on 21 January 1971. Officially Cuthsela died in hospital of “natural causes, brain haemorrhage”² after forty days’ detention. Kairos reports that Cuthsela was detained in December 1970 in connection with the Pietermaritzburg Terrorism Trial, and held at Mkambati camp and Umtata jail. At Mkambati, he was often handcuffed and tied to a tree. He was beaten, kicked and given electric shocks to the ears and penis over four days. Although he complained of severe headaches, he was denied access to a doctor at both Mkambati and Umtata. In January 1971, Cuthsela was taken while unconscious from the Umtata jail to the local hospital, where he died of a brain haemorrhage attributable to arteriosclerosis. The police retained the death certificate.³

43 Mr Mbethwa Silangwe [EC1677/97ETK] was held at Bizana police station with his son, Mr Mnikelwa Silangwe, who said white police officers had beaten his father and attacked his testicles with pliers. Mbethwa died from his injuries a few months later.

269 *KwaNobuhle town councillor Mr Benjamin Kinikini [EC0289/96PLZ] was stoned, stabbed and ‘necklaced’ on 23 March 1985. Four of his sons and nephews were killed with him, either burnt or hacked to death: Luvuyo Stanley Kinikini (12), Mr Qondile Kinikini (18), Mr Silumko Welcome Kinikini (20), and Mr Zamuxolo Eric Kinikini (22) [EC0289/96PLZ]. At the time of the attack, Kinikini was accused of involvement in the abduction of some UDF youths. Kinikini’s widow, Ms Nombuzo Kinikini, told the Commission she had not been present on the Saturday when her husband was killed, but heard about it from others:*

[...] Silumko was hiding in one of the shops at Mboya. He asked one of the businessmen to hide him under the counter. They took him and they ignited him alive in front on the shop. I am telling you as it is. They cut his testicles while he was still alive. [...]

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45 At the Durban hearing, the Commission heard that underground ANC cell leader Haroon Aziz [KZN/MR/013/DN] of Stanger was tortured following his arrest in 1975 under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. He described the various forms of torture he suffered at the hands of the police, including a method that came to be known as the ‘invisible chair’.

They used to make me sit on what they used to call an invisible chair. An invisible chair is you pretend to sit on a chair, but there’s no chair there, and you hold your hands out and you flick your fingers. They interrogate you and you have to answer

² Human Rights Commission, Deaths in detention, August 1990. (This Human Rights Commission was later renamed the Human Rights Committee).

³ Kairos, Political prisoners and detainees in South Africa. Preliminary report, November 1996, pp 5–6; and Kairos, Torture in South Africa, Theunis Jacobus Swanepoel, February 1977, p 26.

the questions. This invisible chair position was quite close to the wall, but I wasn't allowed to lean against the wall. In front of me, one of the special branch policemen used to hold a knife at my navel so as to prevent me from falling easily to the ground. And if they were not satisfied with the answers I gave, from time to time they would hit me on my penis, and sometimes squeeze it. It was very difficult to fall down because of the knife in front but eventually, when I fell, I was kicked and this kicking used to go on and I used to scream and shout and they used to laugh at me like mad hyenas.

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89. Members of the student organisations, AZAPO and the local civic organisations were particular targets of the police in their attempt to repress student resistance in the province. The police response to student protests often involved dogs, tear gas and baton charges, and sometimes shooting directly at demonstrators with live ammunition. Police also detained large numbers of people in an attempt to isolate and remove student leaders from the community.

The case of Richard Sello

One of the most humiliating forms of brutality perpetrated by the police against a student activist is found in the story of Mr Richard Retshidisitswe Sello who was actively involved in the Students' Representative Council (SRC) at his school in Mamafubedu, Petrus Steyn in 1987.

Sello told the Commission that, when student protests broke out at the school on 12 August 1987, the police raided the homes of SRC members. They kicked down the doors of the Sello family home and assaulted Sello's mother.

Sello was detained and tortured during interrogation. His arms were tied behind his knees, his face covered with a cloth and an electric device placed around his stomach. He was kicked and his head was hit against a wall, and he began to bleed heavily. He was thrown into a van with Lesotho registration plates and taken to a police station in Kroonstad. Police then took him to a kraal where they stripped him naked and poured milk over him. A calf was made to drink from his penis. The victim resisted and was detained in Kroonstad where he received medical attention whilst in prison [KZN/JRW/057/PET].

108. Police developed a reputation for dealing extremely brutally with criminal suspects and political activists. Individuals were often arrested, assaulted and tortured before the evidence of their involvement in particular incidents could be reasonably established and before suspects could be brought before due process of law. Electric shocks to the genitals appear to have been a commonplace method of torture

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60. ANC member Christmas Tinto [CT00477] was arrested in 1963 and was also tortured at the Bellville police station. A bag was placed on his head, electric shocks were applied at his fingertips and he was beaten and kicked. In 1968, he was again detained, beaten and held in solitary confinement for eleven months, followed by more torture in 1972. He described being taken blindfolded at night to a cliff by the sea, where he was taken to the edge and

threatened with death.

The following morning I was taken to Pollsmoor prison ... I was put in a big hall. They locked the door and told me to undress which I did. They even forced me to take off my undertrousers and I was left naked. I was told to stand on a chair handcuffed. A rope was thrown over the ceiling rafters and tied around the handcuffs. They put a bag over my head and tied some wires around my fingers, one in each hand, and electric shocks were then applied ... Van Wyk said "Tinto now we are serious and you are going to tell us". He had a pair of pliers in his hand ... He squeezed the cover of my penis with a pliers, pulling all my hair on my private parts till I was unconscious and found myself sleeping in Valkenberg mental hospital for two months. I was charged under the Terrorism Act and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment on Robben Island.

66. Mr Steven Carolus was interrogated by a panel of security policemen who made him sit on an 'invisible chair' when they were dissatisfied with his answers. Taylor and a German-speaking policeman then gave him electric shocks to his genitals. After about a week of questioning and constant beatings, Carolus was held in solitary confinement for seven months before being released.

202 Trialists from the terrorism trial of Mr Ashley Forbes and fourteen others raised aspects of their torture at Benzien's amnesty hearing. Mr Ashley Forbes was arrested on 16 April 1986. He was subjected to the wet bag method while he was naked; a metal rod was inserted in his anus and he was electrically shocked. He was also further assaulted, hit on the head and eyes and had his head hit against the wall until he lost consciousness. His eardrum was broken, he was choked and his nostrils were pulled until they bled. Fellow trialists Mr Niclo Pedro and Mr Peter Jacobs were also subjected to the wet bag method. Pedro was hung from the burglar bars on the window and assaulted.

207 In the northern Karoo town of Noupoort, at least two youths were reported to be mentally disturbed after undergoing torture. Yibanathi Mjada [CT00389], aged fourteen, was tortured by having his penis slammed in a drawer. He was later charged with offences and became mentally disturbed. Ms Gladys Ntsizakalo described what happened to her son Siphwiwo Ntsizakalo [CT01504]

210 Statements taken from the Mossel Bay area reflect brutal torture of a range of young teenagers arrested and tortured by the same group of people during 1985 and 1986. Almost all then spent three to five months in state of emergency detention in George prison. Some were subsequently charged with public violence. The Mossel Bay stories of torture show a number of unusual similarities, including a particularly aggressive form of sexual abuse of both males and females. Several males had their genitals slammed in the drawer of a desk.

211 Mr Patrick Mzathi [CT06108] was detained in 1986 at the age of fourteen by police in Mossel Bay. He was beaten with a handgun, 'klapped' and kicked. Policemen including Sergeant Maritz slammed his penis and testicles in a drawer, which rendered him unconscious. He was kept naked in a cell and was released after nearly three months. A Captain Calitz was among those named for similar torture of other victims.

213. Oudtshoorn activist Mr Siphon Kroma [CT05702] was detained together with Mr Michael Lukas and Mr Mxolisi Madikane in Uitenhage after the fatal shooting of bus inspector and

former SAP member Mr William Blouw on 15 April 1986. Kroma, Lukas and Madikane were severely tortured and forced to make statements implicating Lukas in the death of William Blouw. The torturers were policemen from Oudtshoorn. Kroma told the Commission:

They put me (handcuffed) in the boot of the car. On the way out of KwaNobuhle township, they stopped again. They pulled me out of the boot and the very same show continued – they kicked me, jumping on top of me. Again I went back to my place – the boot – and we drove to the Church Street police station in Uitenhage. When we got there, they first took Michael Lukas in. The only thing that we could hear was Michael screaming. They dealt with him for about two hours. They finished with him and they called me in. They made me sit. They straightened my legs and they brought the SACP flag and they used the flag to tie my legs. And they brought the electric wiring, all ten of my fingers were wired with this thing ... three of them were sitting on my legs. The coloured chap's task was to beat me up and he made sure that he was hurting me. Time and again he would deal with my private parts, to grab at my penis, and my testicles, and punch me in my private parts and also kick me in my private parts. The first [indistinct] of interrogation was trying to link Michael who was with me to a case of Mr Blouw who was shot and killed in the township. They wanted me to admit and agree that Michael said to us that he was responsible for the shooting of Mr Blouw. [...]

320. Mr Ebrahim Hercules [CT01539] was arrested in 1986 and immediately assaulted by two coloured policemen. He was taken to the Bishop Lavis police station where he was placed in a cell with 'common law criminals'. The next morning Sergeant Pikker and Sergeant Todd took him to the Brackenfell police station where he was blindfolded and severely beaten with a heavy metal object. He was returned to solitary confinement. Later during his detention he was sexually assaulted by policemen who put him across a table and, after removing his pants, put the barrel of a gun into his anus and played Russian roulette. Fearing for his life, Hercules signed two statements prepared for him which he was not allowed to read. He was sentenced in 1988 and was released with other political prisoners in 1990.

322. Williams was re-arrested in January 1988 and was told that he would never see his family again. A Sergeant told him, "today is the day you meet your Maker". He was suspended upside down by rope and then beaten. On another occasion his body was tied in a spread-eagled position and grass was placed on his pubic hair. A tortoise was then put to graze on and around his genitals. He was also blindfolded and taken to an unknown place where he was suspended in the air. His torturers told him that it was the highest building in Cape Town and that if he did not co-operate with them they were going to drop him.

Chapter 6:

211. [...] **The case of Pastor Simon Farisani**

Shortly after Muofhe's death in November 1981, Venda security force members Ramaligela, Managa, Nesamari and Rambuda detained and tortured Pastor Simon Farisani in connection with the Sibasa police station bomb explosion and Muofhe's alleged involvement in it.

Pastor Farisani claimed that an attempt was made to force him to write statements to this effect and that he was tortured when he refused. He alleged that Venda police brought in a

white policeman experienced in electric shock torture. Farisani was taken to a room where a bag was put over his head. A glue-like substance was poured on his hair, ears, thighs and private parts. He was given electric shocks, made to stand on his head and thrown onto concrete. He described his torture:

“I was just waiting for any fist that could hit on me so that I should die. And as I was praying, I was pleading to God to die ... They said I was not co-operating. I was beaten again. It was deep harassment. I was just beaten. This head felt a lot of pain. I don't know why I am not mad. Blood was flowing [from] my mouth; I couldn't see ... because my eyes were swollen ... They again said I wasn't co-operating, I was still laying there. Ramaligela said, “Just boil water in your kettle, we want to pour this water in his anus.” Whilst I was laying there, my problem was that – just to pour water in my anus, boiling water in my anus. It didn't mean that I could die there and then – I was – such a case never happened to me. I know such a place is very delicate.”

422. PPP member Samuel Galeboe Thwane [JB00361/03NW] was one of those detained by security police after the attempted coup and was interrogated by two white policemen whose identities were not revealed. He testified to the Commission:

After seven days at (Rooigrond Central Prison) ... I was told to remove my clothes and was tortured with electric shocks to my genitals. This lasted from 7 in the morning until 5 in the evening. I was then taken to my cell. Several days passed until I was eventually released on the 24th of February without any charges pressed against me ... On the 26th of February I was re-detained on the orders of Commissioner Seleke. I was driven back to Rooigrond Central Prison. On the 28th Captains Molale and Mojanaga and nine other security policemen tortured and assaulted me. I was subjected to electric shocks to my genitals and repeatedly slapped and kicked. I was threatened with death and kept in solitary confinement and deprived of visits from my family. I was eventually released in May 1988 without any charges being pressed ...

765. The launch of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in the region led to considerable unrest and miners embarked on a series of strikes. In August 1991, Mr Itumeleng Isaac Mayoyo (JB00938/03NW) was arrested for his activities as a member of the organising committee of the NUM in the Bafokeng North Mine. He told the Commission:

Officer Shuffle then started beating me with a baton. On my fingers, toes and knees. I don't remember the other one who was helping him. My testicles were tied with an electric wire. An object was pushed into my anus. It was a piece of wood I was then charged with High Treason.

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Chapter 5:

38. Military health professionals had a particularly difficult time in upholding international standards of medical ethics and human rights. While they were supposed to follow the same ethical codes as civilian medical workers, they were, at the same time, required to follow orders given by superiors. This created an atmosphere of dual loyalty for these individuals.

Experiences of a military medic⁴

[..] Torture was used during interrogation to extract information about the enemy and the whereabouts of arms caches, as such information could help increase the men's incomes. Some of the procedures used included electric shock around the genitals and pouring boiling water over the chest and genitals. Medics were expected to treat the resultant injuries.

41. The Commission investigated a number of allegations. There were reports of a particular psychologist who used aversion therapy and electric shocks on homosexual military men as part of a treatment for their 'gayness'. Another doctor allegedly helped the military develop chemical weapons and truth serum to be used in questioning.

50. Mr Amos Dyantyi told the Commission that he was severely tortured on the day of his detention in 1985. He almost suffocated when his torturers put a tube over his head. He was electrocuted by having electrodes inserted into his anus and suffered excruciating pain when a mechanical piece of equipment (like a jack- hammer) was forcefully pushed into his stomach. The police were so concerned about his condition that a part-time district surgeon was called in to see him. Before he was taken to the hospital, the doctor allegedly told the Security Branch police to force porridge into his nose so that it would look as if he had suffocated on the porridge.

Chapter 9:

57. Mr Faku described the torture they experienced at the hands of the police:

They would take our genitals and squeeze them against drawers, hoping to get information, because they were convinced that we worked together with people who were in exile.

63. Mr Potwala Saboshego described his experience of torture. He was seventeen years old at the time and politically active on the East Rand. He described the circumstances of his arrest and subsequent torture by the security forces:

It was in 1986, in August. I was [returning] from school. When I arrived at home, Security Branch came and arrested me. They told me the details of my arrest. I was detained at Daveyton police station. On my arrival, they kicked me and assaulted me and they kicked me on my private parts. For the whole day, I was being kicked. Late at six o'clock, they injured my right eye

⁴Based on the public testimony of Sean Callaghan at the Health Sector Hearing, 17 June 1997.