



KGEIKANI KWENI

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The Right Honourable Prime Minister
10 Downing Street,
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UK

May 2007

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the Bushmen of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, have been crying these last years because the Botswana government evicted us forcefully from our ancestral lands and stopped us hunting and gathering there.

We are here in London to give you this letter because we are angry and sad that the British government supported the Botswana government in this. For example, Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for International Development, said, 'those who have been relocated did so by agreement with the government of Botswana.' Other high officials such as Chris Mullin, Minister for Africa, and Lord Triesman, Under-Secretary of State responsible for Africa, said this also.

Members of Parliament from all the main British parties have been to Botswana over the last five years with the invitation of our government and have travelled to the resettlement camps where we were forcefully taken. The latest trip was in April this year. Because these MPs have been treated well by the Botswana government, many have made statements to the media supporting what the government has done to us (though some have supported us).

On these trips the MPs failed to talk to our people and hear our stories. They have not made the effort to see our suffering, which they could have seen very easily if they had travelled independently. In fact, many, many journalists have been to see us from all over the world and they have almost all said that what the government did to us was wrong.

Maybe you know that last December the High Court of Botswana held that in 2002 we were evicted from our lands forcibly, wrongly and without our consent.

Justice Dow said that the Botswana government needs to consider 'whether the disappearance of a people and their culture isn't too high a price to pay for the gain of offering those people services at a centralised location'. Justice Phumaphi said that 'the simultaneous stoppage of the supply of food rations and the issuing of SGLs [hunting licences] is tantamount to condemning the remaining residents of the CKGR to death by starvation.'

We are now here in London to give you this letter and hope that you will see that what your government has done in supporting our government on this issue was wrong and very damaging to us. The whole world was talking about this case but the British government chose to believe the Botswana government against all the evidence. As a minority people in this country, this makes us very sad.

Prime Minister, we are wanting you and your government to acknowledge this.

The British government position is very different to the US State Department Report on Botswana which recognises that we were 'forcibly resettled' and says:

The sustainability of the new settlements was threatened by poor employment opportunities, rampant alcohol abuse, limited hunting and grazing options, and the high cost of providing public services. The San continued to struggle with the lack of economic opportunities in the relocation areas and with a general yearning to return to their homes within the CKGR.

We also hope you will remember that our home was declared a game reserve by the British Protectorate to make sure that our land and livelihoods would be protected for our benefit.

We hope that you will talk strongly to the Botswana government so that they know they will not have your support in the future for human rights abuses that they are still carrying out on the Bushmen. We also need your strong support in order to stop the government harassing us (which they are still doing), to help us to go home (as our government will not help us) and to let us hunt on our lands (as our government will still not let us do this, despite the court judgment). Without our land and without our hunting we will not survive.

Yours sincerely,



Roy Sesana,
Leader, First People of the Kalahari