

Sept 14 - 24 '86

# TORTURE: The pain of repression

BIRDS chirped, papers were ruffled and voices whispered in hushed tones lest they be heard. Furniture was moved as water filled into a container.

This is the subdued audio image that belied the horror of what is allegedly the environment in the vicinity of a torture chamber somewhere in SA's biggest military base, Voortrekkerhoogte. No detainee has yet seen the chamber or its surroundings.

The only account of what it sounds like comes from Father Smangalis Mkhathshwa who was allegedly tortured there.

It could have been Chile or even the Argentine. There was no way of telling except that it was relatively near Pretoria's Hercules Prison.

The alleged torture was as horrific and painful as that described by victims of many Latin American dictatorships. But again these allegations were made by Father Mkhathshwa in SA.

## Protest

His is just another account of the extensive violation of human rights by SA authorities which has characterised every aspect of life in the country for most of its violent history.

Recently these violations have escalated in the wake of widespread protest. And with it has come widespread allegations of torture.

So serious are some of the allegations, that they have struck fear into thousands of detainees and sparked off

tactics.

There has recently also been evidence of killings by police. And army units may have been the result of deliberate and systematic use of lethal force against protestors.

And from midnight on July 20 last year, the government granted immunity in advance to all law enforcement officers, government ministers and state officials for acts committed in "GOOD FAITH" in their use of emergency powers.

Close to 30 000 people have since been imprisoned, many

differs only marginally.

## Shocks

There have been reports of detainees being blindfolded, hooded, beaten and given electric shocks. Some have been threatened with execution with shots being fired close to the head.

Others have been subjected to the helicopter torture where the victim is handcuffed by the wrists and ankles, hung upside down on a pole inserted between the knees, spun around and beaten.

One of the most

never let out of their custody during the time of the poisoning. The Cosas president went missing before the enquiry into the poisoning, which crippled him, could be completed. His whereabouts are still not known nearly five years after his 'disappearance'.

## Wire whips

Other common methods of torture include partial suffocation, beatings with sticks and whips of all kinds.

In Bophuthatswana, The Metal and Allied

held in the psychiatric ward.

In another incident, Billy Nair, 55-year old vice president of the UDF in Natal suffered a perforated eardrum. The injury is often associated with a hard blow to the head.

In a letter smuggled out of prison, Nair alleged to his wife that he had been struck on the head by security police during interrogation.

Just two months after the emergency was declared last year, a 15 year old detainee, Vusi Dlamini, was admitted to hospital unable to hear with one ear. He suffered a broken jaw, fractured skull and forearms. He was a member of the banned Congress of SA Students.

There are numerous other accounts of torture that have been alleged.

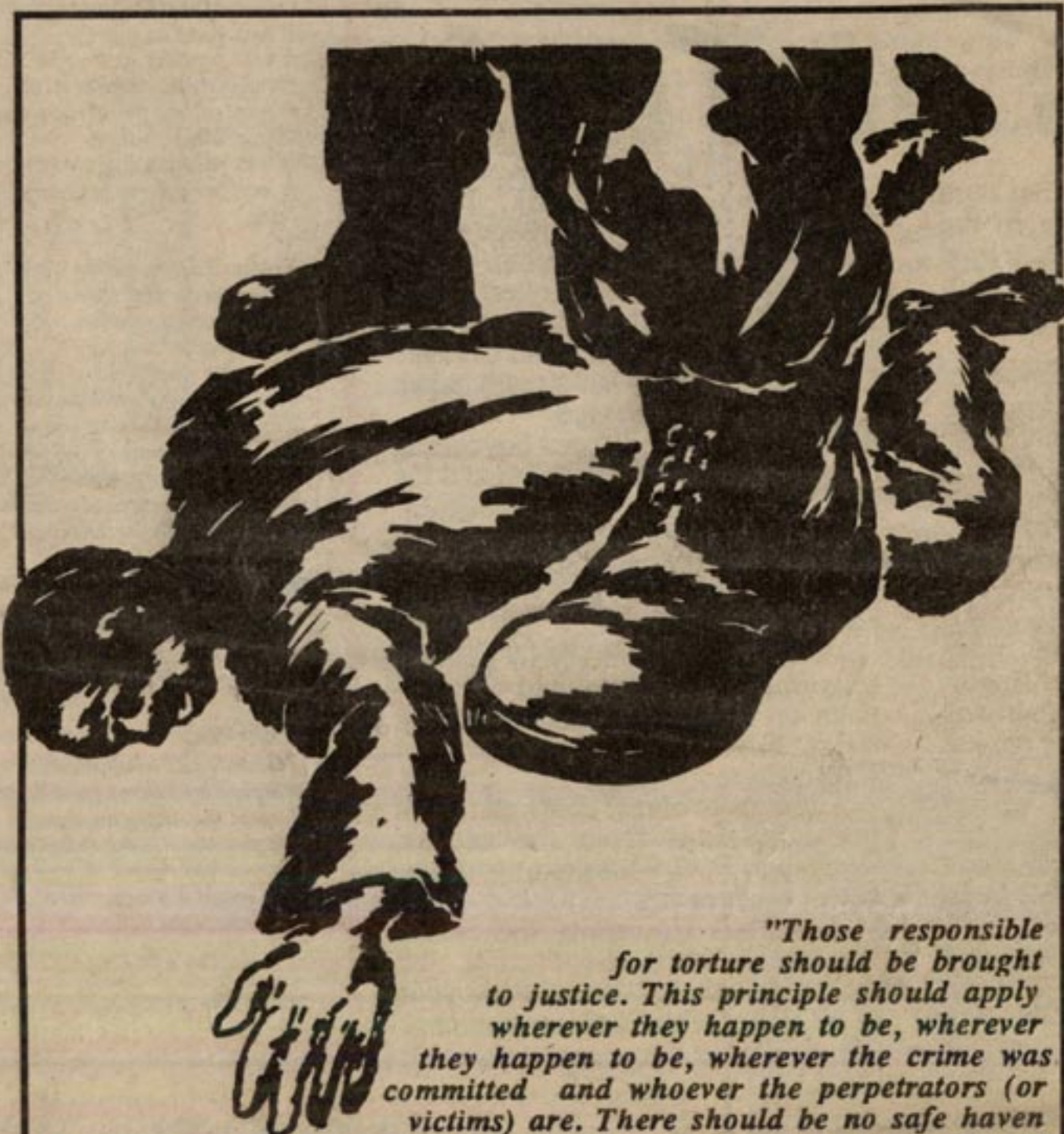
## SADF torture

The latest has been that of Father Mkhathshwa. But this time round, the torture allegedly took place inside a military camp and while the priest was being interrogated by members of the SA Defence Force.

This is the first time it has emerged that the SADF are directly involved in interrogating civilians.

It is also highly significant that the Minister of Law and Order, Louis Le Grange, has not denied Father Mkhathshwa's allegations. He has not confirmed it either.

He does, however, say that the government uses all laws at its



*"Those responsible for torture should be brought to justice. This principle should apply wherever they happen to be, wherever they happen to be, wherever the crime was committed and whoever the perpetrators (or victims) are. There should be no safe haven for torturers--" Amnesty International.*

Graphic: Courtesy of CAP.