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Gana and Gwi San Bushmen of Botswana on the Verge of Cultural Genocide

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In 2002, the Botswana Government forcibly evicted the Gana and Gwi San Bushmen from their homeland - the vast Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) - loaded them onto trucks and took them to three resettlement camps where they have been ever since; this despite the fact that the CKGR was specifically set aside for the San in 1961 and their rights to the land were subsequently re-ratified in 1965. The Botswana government has broken its own laws by moving them. The Gana and Gwi have lived in the CKGR region for at least 35,000 years. They represent the last remaining San in Botswana who are (or rather, were), able to live any kind of traditional lifestyle- that of hunting and gathering.

Previously independent, the 3500 Gana, Gwi and Bakalagadi peoples of the CKGR (which is the size of Switzerland), are now dying at an unsustainable rate: for example, in 2002 - when the San were displaced - some 240 of the former residents represented by their grassroots organization First People of the Kalahari, signed a claim exerting their rights to the land and took their government to court. Since then, some 10% of those signatories have died due to inadequate health care, violence, sexual abuse, prostitution, and AIDS. *and extreme poverty not usually*

The government has put forward several reasons for the removals. First, that the San were over-hunting and gathering - however the CKGR's last draft management plan stated that bio-mass had significantly increased under the Sans' stewardship. Now the government has rescinded the San's special hunting licenses - while at the same time telling the international media and US State Department that the San can still hunt in the reserve. In reality, the licenses have not been re-issued, and San caught hunting by wildlife officials have been arrested, and in some cases beaten and tortured. Second, the government claimed that it was too expensive to keep providing vital services such as water and clinics to the CKGR - an estimated cost of some US\$13,000 per month. Since the removals the government has spent tens of millions on the resettlement camps, which are in equally remote areas. Third, the government claims that it is not appropriate to offer people development inside a game reserve - yet in other reserves within the country, such as Chobe and the adjacent tribal lands, the Botswana government has developed villages and towns without detriment to the environment.

A few months after the San were evicted, two thirds of the CKGR was given over to diamond exploration and mining concessions - to De Beers, Debswana, BHP Billiton and Kalahari Diamonds Ltd. Yet, the government asserts that there is no connection between diamonds and the evictions.

Botswana president Festus Mogae is on record as saying that the Bushmen will "perish like the dodo" if they do not comply with ~~the~~ plans for their forced admission into the Botswana mainstream. The government maintains that it is providing a "preferred lifestyle", but in the camps people are dying of various diseases including AIDS, malaria, TB, pneumonia and dysentery. Government officials have asserted that any journalists seeking to interview the displaced CKGR residents "must get permission from the office of the President" (Daily Mail article from April 29, 2005). This from a government that holds itself up as the shining light of democracy in Africa.

In addition the government is set to strike the section of their constitution (section 14C3) that upholds the right to land based on ethnic and tribal identity. The purported reason is to make the constitution more "tribally neutral". Looks good on the outside but in fact, this section is the very provision that the Bushmen are using to build their case on. If section 14C3 of Botswana's constitution is removed, the San's case will be over.

It is becoming more and more apparent that the deck is stacked against the San in their own country. The people are dying, their culture - including their traditional medicine - is dying with them and they are helpless. Their only recourse may now be the International Criminal Court (ICC). Dr. Mark Levene of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, in a paper published in 2002 and subsequently reprinted in the Botswana Press writes, "in article 2 - of the Genocide Convention itself, not least in its sub-clause c) which proposes that genocide includes 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part'...An early target for ICC scrutiny will surely be the campaign of Bushmen eviction".

The Indigenous Land Rights Fund (ILRF) works in partnership with indigenous communities seeking to gain secure tenure of their ancestral land. [www.landrightsfund.org](http://www.landrightsfund.org)

*Requesting a resolution from the African Nations  
use the tools available to  
then to appeal from  
BPS  
Govt*

*A special  
reporter has  
been sent out now  
ready 3 years  
later represented  
by*

*Spoken to the  
forum in Sept 20  
+ then represented  
by  
We realize this is a  
difficult issue  
we are all to aware  
of the intricacies  
involved*

*last remaining*

*residing in*

Statement by Miss. Kim Langerbecker

INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS FUND (ILRF)  
INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
17/05/05 (36), 54

WE ARE HEARTENED TO HEAR THAT ASIDE FROM THE MANY STATEMENTS MADE IN SUPPORT OF THE NEED FOR THE MDG'S TO BE APPROACHED FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE... THAT ALSO SEVERAL ORGS INCLUDING UNESCO, UNDP + THE ILO AS WELL AS SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES FROM ~~governments~~ <sup>nations</sup> such as Spain + Norway spoke about the land rights issues that many indigenous people are currently facing. The MDG's will never be fully realized w/o special attn to this issue. For indigenous peoples nearly every aspect of their culture comes from the land - medicine, food, ceremonies - their very identity. I recently attended an event where a speaker stated that for an indigenous person to lose their land is tantamount to losing their mind.

I would also like to acknowledge w/ gratitude the remarks Dr. William LANGEVELDT, the rep from S. Africa, made yesterday ~~re~~ regarding the current situation of the San