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CCHDC CONSIDERATION OF THE KHOI-KHOI'S CLAIM TO LAND IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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*Paper presented to the Seventeenth Session of the Economic and Social
Council, United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.*

Commission on Human Rights,
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities.

26 - 30 July 1999.

Re: Agenda Item 5.

WGIP 99/SAT. ZAT/3

THE KHOI-KHOI ~~PROBLEM~~ AND LAND: A SERIOUS SOUTH AFRICAN DILEMMA

This is only a short summary of my paper, which will be available at the back *if only, but is*

In South Africa's old Apartheid years the first thing that our children were being taught in history, is that the colonizers from Europe found "an empty land". The truth is that we, the Khoi-Khoi, had traded with the European seafarers for decades and took care of their hungry, seasick patients whenever they would land at the Cape on their way to the East. However, when the Dutch decided to settle in our land in the 17th century without our permission, we were forced to fight long, bitter wars to defend it. Especially their deliberate spread of European smallpox, against which our ancestors were not immune, killed large numbers, including women and children. Since about 1800 Britain took over from the Netherlands as colonial power and continued to oppress us and dispossess us from our land. It is therefore no wonder that *anger* became pervasive among the Khoi-Khoi *which is still present today*.

Madam chair, allow me to ^{first} refer to the role of ^{Xtian} ~~the~~ missionaries in this sad history. It should be noted that right from the start the Dutch Reformed Church, being the **State Church**, regarded us as a heathen, barbaric, ungodly people - because it suited them politically and economically to do so. Christianity, instead of bringing the message of freedom, equality and justice, took full advantage of the oppressive situation and benefited from the massive land theft that followed. This shameful complicity of the Christian Church in the impoverishment and the degradation of the First Indigenous Nation of South Africa, constitutes one of the ugliest chapters in its entire history. **Today** the descendants of the Khoi-Khoi, the so called Coloured people, are mostly poor and jobless, struggling to uphold family values and their dignity - *all because they still have not regained their land*.

The newly elected president of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki, inaugurated in June 1999, frequently calls upon all South Africans to bring about an African Renaissance. However, there can be no renaissance in SA if the Khoi-Khoi have not been granted their God-given right to have their land back.

I therefore propose *three* measures to be placed on the agenda of the UN Commission on Human Rights:

Firstly, we demand **reparations** from the ex-colonial powers who alienated us from our land (which we regard as a sacred gift from Tsui // Goab - God), namely the Dutch and British Governments.

Secondly, that the colonial churches of South Africa **give back** their large portions of land which are rightfully ours.

Finally, that the Government of South Africa **fully respects** our human rights and grant us land where we can restore our culture and dignity.

I want to state clearly that we, the Khoi-Khoi, honestly want to be part of what the great Nelson Mandela called the South African Rainbow Nation, but *we can only be reconciled to other South Africans, if we are first reconciled to our land.*

Madam Rapporteur, I thank you sincerely.

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