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WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This list of known women political prisoners in South Africa is compiled exclusively from newspaper reports. It is thus inevitably incomplete. Trials are reported only intermittently and in a fragmentary fashion. There are almost certainly women currently serving sentences whose trials went unreported. Moreover, since South African law forbids the naming of defendants under 18 years old, it is impossible to determine the number of female juveniles serving prison terms for political offences.

While the exact number of women political prisoners is uncertain, there are clearly fewer women political prisoners than men. In some ways, prison conditions for the women are worse than their male counterparts. Gains made by prisoners are often not shared by women political prisoners, at least not immediately. Evidence would suggest that female political prisoners have more difficulty than male political prisoners in, for example, obtaining access to visitors and in receiving letters and newspapers. Moreover, the reluctance of the South African Government to allow political and non-political prisoners to mix, taken with the relatively small numbers of women political prisoners, means that in many cases much of their sentence is spent in solitary confinement.

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The list is divided into three sections. The first deals with women sentenced to death. There are currently two women awaiting execution in South Africa as a result of political activity. They are, however, in two different prisons. Theresa Ramashamola is in Pretoria Central and Daisy Modise is in the Bophuthatswana bantustan's Central Prison. If either Theresa or Daisy is hanged, it would be the first execution of a woman political prisoner. In the late 1950s, a woman, Madinoge Morwamoele, was sentenced to death for her part in the widespread opposition to the imposition of the Bantu Authorities Act; however, her sentence was later commuted following public protest.

The second section deals with women political prisoners sentenced for activities relating to political mobilization and organization. Most of them were charged under the Internal Security Act or with the common law offence of treason.

The final section lists women convicted of other common law offences, for example public violence, murder or arson, in cases arising out of mass protest. Of note is the length of sentence handed down to women for these offences.

In all three sections, the list is in chronological order (ie according to date of sentence).

Abbreviations used in the list

CL Common Law
ISA Internal Security Act
TA Terrorism Act

Section I: Women political prisoners sentenced to death

	<u>Law</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>
Ramashamola, Theresa		Born 1962
Sentenced: 13.12.85 - Death	CL - Murder.	
Court: Rand Supreme	ISA - Subversion	

Ramashamola and five others, collectively known as the Sharpeville Six, were sentenced to death for the killing of a Lekoa councillor, Jacob Dlamini, in Sharpeville, on 3 September, 1984 following the violent dispersal of a protest march against rent increases. Ramashamola, who was alleged to have incited the crowd to kill the councillor, said she withdrew from the march after being hit on the head by a rubber bullet. The appeal of the Six was rejected in December 1987 and an appeal for clemency to the State President was rejected in March 1988. The date for their execution was set for 18 March. On 17 March, however, they were granted a stay of execution to allow their lawyers to apply for a re-opening of the trial to consider new evidence. This process is still continuing and on 12 July the stay of execution was made indefinite.

Last known prison: Pretoria Central (April 1988)

Modise, Daisy	CL - Murder	Born 1962
Sentenced: May 1987 - Death		
Court: Temba		

A member of the Stinkwater Youth Organization. Few details are available but she was reportedly convicted with two others for participation in 'necklacings' and 'people's courts'.

Last known prison: Rooigrond - Bophuthatswana Central Prison (October 1987)

Section II: Women political prisoners sentenced for activities relating to political mobilization and organization.

	<u>Law</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>
Hogan, Barbara		Born 1952
Sentenced: 21.10.82 - 10 years	CL - Treason	
Court: Rand Supreme		

An ANC member and post-graduate student researching into unemployment who sent documents on trade union organisation and coded messages to the ANC. Hogan was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for treason and four years for membership of the ANC, to run concurrently.

Last known prison - Pretoria Central (1986)

Keagile, Lilian		Born 1959
Sentenced: 18.3.83 - 6 years	TA, ISA	
Court: Johannesburg Regional		

ANC member, detained November 1981, tortured and sexually assaulted during detention. Keagile was charged in November 1982 with promoting the aims of the ANC by acting as a courier, sending plans of strategic targets to the ANC and receiving training.

Mhlongo, Bongiwe Yvonne		Born 1958
Sentenced: 28.8.86 - 2 years and 6 months		
Mkhize, Zandile		Born 1957
Sentenced: 2.9.86 - 3 years		
Court: Rand Supreme		

Mhlongo, a teacher in Soweto, and Mkhize, a nurse in Durban, were both sentenced for refusing to testify in the trial of Lentswane, Ngwenya and Malamba, who were later convicted of treason for conspiring to reconnoitre on behalf of the ANC.

Modise, Thandi		Born 1959
Sentenced: 7.11.80 - 8 years	TA	
Court: Kempton Park Regional		

An ANC member. Modise left South Africa after the 1976 Soweto uprising and received military training in Tanzania and Angola for the ANC. She was on active service inside South Africa for 18 months before being arrested. She was then pregnant and told the court that she was repeatedly assaulted while in custody. Charged with undergoing military training from 1976-78, possessing ammunition and explosives and placing explosives in two Johannesburg department stores.

Last known prison - Pretoria Central (1981)

Passtoors, Helene Born 1942
 Sentenced: 19.5.86 - 10 years CL - Treason
 Court: Rand Supreme

A foreign national entitled to both Belgian and Dutch citizenship, Passtoors had been living in South Africa since February 1985. She was detained in June of that year and held in solitary confinement. She was alleged to have carried out reconnaissance work for the ANC and established arms caches. She said that she supported the ANC and had learnt secret ANC codes.

Last known prison - Kroonstad (March 1988)

Sparg, Marion Monica Born 1958
 Sentenced: 6.11.86 - 25 years CL - Treason
 Court: Rand Supreme

An ANC member and journalist who underwent military training in Angola, brought limpet mines into the country in 1986 and planted them at police headquarters in John Vorster Square, Johannesburg and at an East London police station. The latter device did not explode.

Apelgren, Greta Margaret Born 1957
 Sentenced: 14.4.87 - 21 months ISA
 Court: Pietermaritzburg Supreme

Apelgren, a social worker from Wentworth in Durban, originally faced charges of murder, attempted murder and 'terrorism' arising out of the escape of an ANC combatant - Gordon Webster - from hospital in May 1986 and a car bomb attack in Durban in June 1986. She was eventually acquitted on all counts relating to the bombing but was found guilty of assisting in Webster's escape and reconnoitring targets for action. Her co-defendant, Robert John McBride, was sentenced to death for the Durban bombing.

Madumise, Regina Tseleng Born 1949
 Sentenced: 22.6.88 - 5 years ISA
 Court: Kroonstad Regional

Madumise, a former domestic worker, was detained in October 1987. At her trial she was said to have received 'ANC training' in Angola and returned to South Africa with instructions to observe police and SADF offices. She is the mother of a deaf son.

Sofute, Bukiwe Gertrude
 Ndiabeni, Nontembiso
 Sentenced: 9.9.87 - 6 years
 Court: Port Elizabeth

ISA

Born 1953
 Born 1957

In custody since August 1985, their case was only heard after 12 postponements. They were charged with furthering the aims of the ANC, 'terrorism', unlawfully importing arms and ammunition and both undergoing and providing military training.

Twala, Gloria
 Sentenced: 3.4.88 - 1 year
 Court: Bethal

ISA

Born 1969

Twala, a high school student and assistant secretary of the Witbank Youth Congress, was convicted with 11 other Witbank community activists. She was in solitary confinement from November 1986 until the time of the trial.

Khan, Farieda
 Sentenced: 8.6.88 - 6 months
 Court: Cape Town

ISA

Born 1963

Khan, a pre-school teacher, pleaded guilty to being a member of the ANC. She admitted joining the organisation in Botswana with her husband who is still resident there. She was detained in July 1987 with her mother and sister and was held for 3 months under section 29 of the ISA.

Section III: Women political prisoners convicted for activities relating to mass protest; unless otherwise stated all have been charged with common law offences

Birthdate

Unnamed girl
Sentenced: 6.7.85 - 8 years
Court: Kimberley

Born 1968

Convicted of arson during school protests in Kimberley.

Modise, Monica
Musi, Aletta
Sentenced: July 86 - ?
Court: Klerksdorp

Born?

Born?

Modise and Musi were convicted of public violence and attending an illegal gathering, after incidents involving the stoning of police vehicles.

Matroos, Regina
Memani, Amelia
Motasi, Rita
Manxeny, Jacqueline
Unnamed woman
Sentenced: 3.9.86 - 10 years
Court: Worcester

Born 1960

Born 1964

Born 1963

Born 1968

Born 1947

All convicted of public violence following the petrol-bombing of property owned by vigilantes.

Fante, Phyllis Notutuzelo
Sentenced: 23.3.87 - 15 years
Court: Cape Town

Born ?

Fante was one of eight Zolani residents jailed for the attempted murder of a vigilante's wife, whose evidence as a state witness had led to the jailing of Fante's husband for eight years on an arson charge.

Twala, Sannah - Life imprisonment	Born 1964
Motaung, Matlakala Elizabeth - 10 years	Born 1959
Sobuzi, Lorraine Zanele - 10 years	Born 1954
Unanamed girl - 2 1/2 years	Born 1971
Sentence: 24.6.87	
Court: Pretoria	

All were convicted for murder following the killing of a suspected police informer in July 1985. Twala is the first woman sentenced to life imprisonment for a political offence.

SETI, Kolliswa	Born 1969
Sentenced: November '87 - 15 years	
Court: Bisho	

Imprisoned in a Ciskei bantustan jail, Seti was amongst five people imprisoned for the killing of a suspected vigilante in July 1986. A co-accused was given the death sentence.

Ngwata, Pumla - 12 years	Born 1965
Jikela, Nmalungisa - 3 1/2 years	Born 1969
Sentenced: 24.11.87	
Court: Grahamstown	

Ngwata and Jikela were convicted of public violence and culpable homicide following the death of a man and girl when a house was burnt down, during a period of intense repression of unrest and boycotts in Fort Beaufort in March 1985.

Mdola, Nontopeko	Born ?
Sentenced: 18.1.88 - 18 years	
Court: Grahamstown	

Mdola was convicted with seven other residents of Hanover in the Eastern Cape of murder following the stoning of a man in December 1985. Four of her co-defendants were sentenced to death.

Dyandi, Neliswa Nonua	Born 1968
Convicted: 12.7.88 - details of sentence due beginning of August	
Court: East London	

Dyandi was convicted of murder and public violence following the killing of a man in November 1985 during a period of police repression and consumer and educational boycotts in Stutterheim. During the trial Dyandi testified that she had been assaulted by the police and forced to make a confession.