

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 18 DECEMBER 2019

**RE: EXHUMATION AT WINTERVELD CEMETERY: THE LAST OF THE
'MAMELODI 10'**

THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 2019: 9.30 am – 12 noon

**OLD WINTERVELD CEMETERY, Klip Road (corner of 7th Road), Winterveld
(GPS Location point will be sent on request)**

BACKGROUND

On 26 June 1986, ten teenagers from Mamelodi were lured to their deaths in a joint operation by members of the Northern and Western Transvaal Security Branch and the SADF's Special Forces. Security Police agent Joe Mamasela collected the teenagers in a minibus by pretending to be an MK member taking them into exile. Instead, he drove them into the bushes near Zeerust where they were surrounded by security forces. The teenagers were made to lie on the ground where they were injected by Special Force members with an unknown substance which made them unconscious. They were then placed in another minibus and an accident was faked. The vehicle was set alight and the ten teenagers were burnt to death. The burnt bodies were found by locals and were subsequently buried as unidentified paupers.

The families of the ten assumed they had gone into exile, but the ten teenagers never returned and their fate was unknown.

It was only during the TRC's amnesty processes that the families learnt the truth of what had happened. Eight operatives from SADF Special Forces, Northern and Western Transvaal Security Branches applied for and were granted amnesty for the operation by the TRC.

RECOVERY OF THE REMAINS

The mothers of the Mamelodi 10 then searched for their remains for many years themselves, without success.

In 2005, the Missing Persons Task Team in the NPA conducted investigations that led to Winterveld cemetery. Extensive excavations at the cemetery, which does not have records or markings, were able to locate nine of the ten bodies. The tenth body could not be located despite extensive searches and opening nearly two hundred graves. Due to the burnt and highly degraded condition of the remains, individual DNA identification was not possible. The nine bodies were reburied in a special ceremony in Mamelodi in 2009.

NEW APPROACH

In 2017, the MPTT began a new approach in Winterveld Cemetery to try to locate the last of the Mamelodi 10 as well as four other Mamelodi activists who were abducted and killed by the Northern Transvaal Security Police in the 1980s.

A drone was used to map the entire cemetery in photographic strips which were then knitted together with advanced software to create a very high resolution photographic map. This map was then used to isolate areas for further investigation and excavation. This was the first time that a drone was used for complex and extensive mapping in a human rights investigation on the African continent.

Excavations began in 2019 using the high resolution map. In November 2019, a grave was located containing the remains of a young male with extensive burn pattern injuries and associated evidence identical to the nine bodies recovered in 2005 and that were identified as belonging to the Mamelodi 10 group.

The remains of this individual will be exhumed in the presence of the mothers and family members of the Mamelodi 10 who have waged a tireless struggle over decades to recover the remains of their children.

Contact Kholiswa Mdhuli on 082 964 4319 or Madeleine Fullard on 082 576 9220 for further information and GPS location point for the cemetery.

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