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" -- Never Drink from The Same Cup "

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STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THE KALAHARI

Aaron /Ar/twa Johannis: We have no land which is called after us. We seem to be an appendix of other peoples. We feel discriminated. Everything will be lost.

Komtsa Komtsa: We are with many peoples, like there are many Tswana groups. We are the original inhabitants of Ghanzi Ridge. The black and white people came later.

In the Botswana Constitution the Bushmen are not mentioned. In each district there are now settlements of Bushmen.

Aaron /Ar/twa Johannis: The people here speak of „nomadism“. Why have they never asked us why we are going round. We are no nomads. There have always been territorial grounds that were respected by all. There is therefore no justification to say that we have no right on land.

Since we have no land rights it seems that we are not intelligent people. Because of our culture we have always survived, so we are intelligent.

If Government wants to assist us it should provide us with enough land instead of hand-outs.

The Government speaks of consultation. But where we live there is no consultation. Botswana Church Council helps us on transport. Komtsa and myself, we have seen that everywhere it is the same in Botswana. It seems strange that the Government of Namibia does consult the people. It seems as if the Government of Botswana wishes to fight us because we want our rights.

In Parliament the question was posed if Bushmen and Botswana Church Council are the same. Botswana Church Council is called the church of the devil..

What hurts is that the „red people“ are disappearing. That is why we want our rights, our land, our culture.

The District Commissioner came to D'Kar and we presented this issue. He stated that we should marry black people so that our children will be Batswana... We have seen on our trip that black men do not take Bushmen women. And I will never ask a black woman, that means death, that is no use...

We know customary law in Botswana. If we marry a black woman we pay in cattle. But if black men marry Bushmen women there is no compensation.

The law does not work for us. It is only today that I heard about the proposal for the review of the Remote Area Development Programme.

We hear the word „development“ for such a long time, the word is there, but our land and culture are disappearing. Words are easily spoken but there is no implementation.

Especially in times of elections there are many words, but after the elections we are again „remote area dwellers“.

Komtsa Komtsa: Thank God that I am here. I will not say much, Aaron has said everything and it is the truth.

The Government leaves us. We are discriminated even by our Government and that does hurt.

Councillors and Members of Parliament should represent us.

Going to the police is useless. Seven or eight years cattle was stolen from me. The police officer wrote it on a matchbox and there was no follow-up. Also the Labour Department is discriminating me.

There was therefore every reason to go to Botswana Church Council. It seems that Botswana Church Council is helping us. As a result now Botswana Church Council is being discriminated.

Botswana got independence in 1966. The Government said, „We are all Batswana“. You should not use your own name but be called „Motswana“. Why then am I called in a different way? I want to be recognized as a citizen, do consult me, instead of giving orders to move. We are no nomads, we had territories. Our people in Ghanzi did not even know Maun because they stayed within their territories.

When wildlife is no longer there, how can Government say that we did it. What would Government say if you compare the amount of wildlife at independence and now? Then there was so much wildlife. What then has happened with it from 1966 onwards?

The word RAD means „I am deep, deep in the ground“, therefore I do not hear anything. We want to know how we are called.

We are called „burners of the veld“. Why then does God, who burns the veld by lightning, not have problems?

A lion that eats an eland does not go to prison. But I, when I eat an eland I do go to prison.

At the workshop of the Botswana Society none answered that question about the burning of the veld.

Who washes the name „RAD“ from my back? It has to get off...

We are called „Basarwa“ and we call the black people „Khebbe“.

We have a lot of pain and when I go on, this will continue till tomorrow.

When the Boers came to Ghanzi they found me at the waterside, now they have the land.

The Government has followed their trace.

When Queen Elizabeth ruled we had „house-tax“. We asked her where the money went to. She said it is used to develop the country. But now the money is gone and the land is gone. And I have seen people who take away our children.

* The statements by Aaron /Ar/twa Johannis and Komtsa Komtsa to the Tune Landboskole Conference were given in their own native language and translated simultaneously by John Hardbattle. Rob v.d. Boom of the *Kalahari Support Group* in Amsterdam took notes of the statements as they were translated into English. The statements presented here are in the words taken down by Rob v.d. Boom.

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