

12 June 2012

Violent riots further affirm the need to protect the right to health at Lindela—yet Home Affairs idles.

On 28 May 2012, a group of organisations wrote to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to request that it urgently investigate the state of health and health care service provision at Lindela Repatriation Centre (Lindela).

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), SECTION27, Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), and People against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) requested a response from the SAHRC by 11 June 2012. To date, they have not received a response.

Recent reports of violent protests within Lindela add even further urgency and credence to the request and the need to ensure that health and health rights are protected. Therefore, the organisations are now making the request public.

The request details a long and shameful history of human rights abuses at Lindela, especially in regard to the right to health. These abuses have been documented throughout Lindela's existence. Moreover, what we know about Lindela is shocking, but our lack of knowledge of what occurs behind its walls is cause for even greater concern. Despite its history and a recent outbreak of violent riots, Lindela still operates in secrecy and with impunity.

Furthermore, on 30 November 2011, MSF, an organisation with experience and expertise in the provision of health care services in Southern Africa, requested access to Lindela in order to conduct an independent medical assessment of the state of health care provision. The request was denied.

Most recently, on 4 June 2012, violent riots broke out at Lindela. On 8 June 2012, the Times reported on the riots. According to the report, inmates described their lives as "hell". Also according to the Times, the Department of Home Affairs has not responded to several reports about inhumane conditions at the "infamous Lindela Repatriation Centre".

MSF, SECTION27, LHR and PASSOP renew their calls to the SAHRC to urgently investigate the state of health and health care service provision at Lindela. The organisations hope and expect that the SAHRC will act on the request.

MSF, SECTION27, LHR and PASSOP also call on the Department of Home Affairs to take immediate action to resolve the inhumane conditions to which detainees at Lindela are subjected.

The full request is attached.

Please contact John Stephens (by email at stephens@section27.org.za or by phone at 011 356 4100) and Jens Pederson (by email at msfocb-johannesburg-coord@brussels.msf.org or by phone at 011 403 4440) with inquiries.

This statement is endorsed by MSF, SECTION27, LHR and PASSOP.

[ENDS]