

Tourism boycott of Botswana called for after government ignores court ruling

On 5 July, 2004, a landmark court case started that successfully challenged the illegal eviction of Botswana's Bushmen from their ancestral land. But, since then, the Botswana government has continued its persecution of the last hunting Bushmen, for which it has been condemned nationally and internationally.



Image: www.freedigitalphotos.net

In 2006, Botswana's High Court ruled that the Bushmen's eviction from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve had been "unlawful and unconstitutional", and that they had the right to live, hunt and gather inside the reserve and did not have to apply for permits to enter it.

But despite the ruling the Botswana government has:

- Refused to provide water to the Bushmen in one of the driest places on Earth;
- Prevented them from hunting for their survival by intimidation, torture and arrest;
- Required most Bushmen to apply for restrictive permits to enter their reserve;
- Barred their long-standing lawyer, who successfully represented the Bushmen in three court cases, from entering the country and representing his clients; and
- Accused the Bushmen of harming the wildlife inside the reserve (for which it has not produced any evidence), while allowing a diamond mine to go ahead and issuing licences for fracking exploration.

Botswana's High Court called the case "a harrowing story of human suffering and despair"; the UN's former water advisor, Maude Barlow, said: "It's hard to imagine a more cruel and inhuman way to treat people"; Botswana political activist and former Robben Island prisoner Michael Dingake said: "Without hunting, Basarwa [Bushman] are literally being starved to surrender"; and the BBC's John Simpson called the government's policies "ethnic cleansing of the Kalahari".

Condemnation

Botswana's treatment of the Bushmen has further been condemned by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the US State Department, the United Nations, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and local and international media.

Survival International, the global movement for tribal peoples' rights, has called for a tourism boycott of Botswana until the Bushmen are allowed to live freely and in peace on their land. Several travel companies and over 8000 people have supported the boycott, and a global ad campaign has brought the message to hundreds of thousands of travellers.

Survival's director, Stephen Corry, said: "As if depriving the Bushmen of water and forcing them from their land wasn't enough, now they're accused of 'poaching' because they hunt their food. The Bushmen face arrest and beatings, torture and death, while fee-paying big-game hunters are encouraged. All tourists who visit Botswana's game parks should ask themselves - 'How many tribal communities were destroyed in the making of this reserve?'"

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>