

Name: Saul Kholisile Ndzumo

Date of Birth: 1922

Date of Death: 10 September 1980

Abstract: With multiple positions in the Transkei government and a member of the ANC, Saul Ndzumo was an active member in politics during the apartheid. However, the decisions he made during his political career came to an abrupt halt when he was arrested in October 1980 for obstructing the Terrorism Act. Two days following his arrest, he was found dead in his cell at Idutywa. His case was reopened in 1996 by the [TRC](#), in hope that his family could find peace in his death.



Saul Ndzumo pictured in the Transkei Assembly Photo (October 1976) Media 24, [Gallo Images](#).

Saul Ndzumo was one of the many individuals whom died in detention under [apartheid](#). Ndzumo was different from other anti-apartheid activists because, in addition to being a member of the [African National Congress](#) (ANC), he held numerous jobs in the Transkei government. His death in detention sparked interest at the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) trials.

Saul Ndzumo, 58, lived in Mzizangwa in the Transkei [bantustan](#), with his family. He was a father of three children and an active member within the anti-apartheid movement. His son, Sithilifu Ndzumo, considered his father to be very politically-minded as demonstrated by his membership in the movement and his father's consistent advising for their family to follow the ANC.¹ This habitual advice by Ndzumo left the family to believe that he was a part of the underground ANC organization. Many individuals (both members in the ANC and Transkei) would not be fond of this participation, as it created a tense atmosphere, due to the disagreeing

¹ S Ndzumo, East London (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Human Rights Violations Submissions - Questions and Answers).

terms among the two groups. The ANC was an anti-apartheid organization that opposed the establishment of bantustans such as the Transkei under the [Bantu Authorities Act](#).

The Transkei Assembly was the political group that governed the Transkei, one of the Bantustans. The Bantustans consisted of a number of political entities in South Africa, considered to be self-governing by the apartheid government.² The apartheid government used these 'independent' polities as a method of housing most-to-all Black South Africans in an effort to justify both the [Apartheid](#) and the forced relocation of Black individuals from areas designated for whites.³ Initially, the government focused their efforts on the Transkei, establishing it as a Territorial Authority in 1959. This area was home to isiXhosa-speakers. However, as they were placed in poor lands that were both over-farmed and un-liveable environments, leaving these people to struggle even more so, many individuals were unhappy- specifically the Pondos. The Pondos were significantly dissatisfied with the Transkei Assembly, and specifically with Ndzumo as the head of Agriculture and Forestry. They did not understand his inability to perform well in the wake of disguised corruption. The Pondos expressed that they and their land were sold to the government. They suggested that this had happened on the premise that the bantustan leader [Kaiser Matanzima](#) appointed family members as cabinet members who abuse their positions while in office, leaving ordinary people with a great disrespect. The Pondos suggested that Ndzumo was one of the main offenders in this corrupt office, as he was the

² Roger Southall, 'The Beneficiaries of Transkeian 'Independence'', JSTOR, 1977, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/159788>.

³ Tinashe, 'Transkei,' South African History Online, January 19, 2017, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/places/transkei>.

Chief's Secretary and Qaukeni Tribal Authority Secretary.⁴ This led the Pondos to begin to resist the government. They were forcing Bantu education, Bantustan Chiefs' rule (in order to implement government policies), and they began to tax livestock. In an effort to halt the revolt, on 6 June 1960, the government sent policemen to remove the resistance. This became known as the Ngquza Hill Massacre. During a Pondo meeting at Ngquza Hill, helicopters appeared and dropped policemen off with guns. Although the Pondo men surrendered, indicating they were unarmed and would not pose a threat, the policemen continued to shoot, killing 11 people.⁵ Yet, it was not until ten days after the Ngquza Hill shootings that Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner for the Transkei Leibbrand suggested that the Pondos needed help. He suggested that the reclamation would begin but only if the people wanted the help. The Pondos replied to this offer and suggestion with great thanks and gratification, in which they began the process of removing individuals from the assembly.⁵ Furthermore, since people did not like him, Ndzumo was one of the first to be removed from office as the Chief's Secretary and Qaukeni Tribal Authority Secretary and the start of a new assembly began.

Three years later, the Transkei Act of 1963, which was then the territorial authority was changed for a newer legislative assembly.⁶ This legislative assembly would grant a limited number of law-making powers and further bring about the beginning of the development of the Transkei Bantustan. African Chief Minister [Kaiser Dali Matanzima](#), was then appointed and a cabinet was formed, which assisted in creating a semi-developed constitution. Yet, it was not

⁴ Victor Mxolisi Mnaba, 'The role of the church towards the Pondo revolt in South Africa from 1960-1963,' UNISA thesis, <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/1801/01dissertation.pdf?sequence=2>.

⁵ Thembela Kepe and Lungisile Ntsebeza, eds., *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁶ Roger Southall, 'The Beneficiaries of Transkeian 'Independence''.

until 1974 when the legislative assembly finally approved to grant the movement towards the Transkei's full independence, after Chief Matanzima motioned it. At this critical point, the corruption in the Transkei assembly was revealed. This corruption is thought to have occurred because the cabinet members were chosen by Chief Matanzima, whom was ultimately chosen by the apartheid government and thus was known to be sympathetic to apartheid policies. The government had chosen Chief Matanzima to create the look that these territories were truly independent, yet Matanzima was an ally of the government, allowing the government the power to control the Transkei behind the disguise of independence.⁷

Ndzumo was the Minister of Agriculture in the new assembly, which was set up in a way that enabled little disagreement. Their electoral system was rigged in a manner that allowed the Chief to have a majority power of the vote. This was achieved via his position as an ex-officio member, which was necessary in order to out-number the cabinet members. Additionally, Matanzima would be able to restrict activity of the candidates and people whom opposed the policies, as well as restrict the municipal influence throughout the course of the voting process. This corrupt position of power forced a dynamic in which the assembly members have effectively no say in the legislative side of the government processes and changes.⁸ Now appointed as the minister of agriculture in the Transkei Assembly, Ndzumo was under great scrutiny for his poor performance in office which was due to the bad conditions of the land. His position seemed merely superficial with no meaningful function or influence, however not many people knew or understood this, instead they viewed themselves being deprived of their rights.

⁷ Tinashe, 'Transkei,' South African History Online.

⁸ Tinashe, 'Transkei,' South African History Online.

These individuals were living in the Republic of South Africa but were robbed of their South African citizenship due to the Transkei Assembly. It was not until 1978-1980 that Transkei government really began to finally fall apart. During this period, Matanzima attempted to engage in an argument over Griqualand East, leaving him to estrange Transkei from the apartheid government.⁹ However, this estrangement did not last long as with the bantustan in great economic distress, they were forced to accept a 'bail-out' from the apartheid government. The product of this agreement would be to help in the ability for the South African Government to assume control over their budget. The assembly was now in crisis because of this. Following, [Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo](#), who was one of Matanzima's old rivals, created a new party which was known as the DPP, or the Progressive Democratic Party.⁸ Yet despite its great following of people, Matanzima continued with his old tricks, by attempting to turn one of Sabata's minor charges into a more severe conviction, a conviction in which Dalindyebo was arrested for. However, Matanzima's actions only damaged the Transkei, leaving them greatly embarrassed as large majority of people were in favor of both the DPP and Sabata.

Following this scandal, in 1980 the majority of the members of the DPP were arrested, forcing Sabata to go into exile and Matanzima's party to lose support.⁸ This period is very crucial to understand because this during stage, Ndzumo would lose his position in the Transkei. According to *Africa: Semi-Weekly Interafrican News Survey*, Ndzumo presented a speech attempting to overthrow Matanzima at the end of Matanzima's rule.¹⁰ This would suggest that Ndzumo's son was correct to think that his father was a supporter of Sabata and the ANC, thus wanting the right thing for South Africans but he was unable to due to the lack of power he had

⁹ Tinashe, 'Transkei,' South African History Online.

¹⁰ 'Ndzumo dead in cell,' *Africa: Semi-Weekly Interafrican News Survey*, September 12, 1980.

in the assembly. However, his efforts to overthrow the Bantustan leaders resulted in his detention.¹¹

According to his son, two nights after he was released from his job, the police arrived at their home and talked with Ndzumo for a long period outside. When he arrived back inside he stated that they were going to arrest him and he was never going to be back because they were going to kill him. The last words he heard his father say were: *'I am serious, they are going to kill me, but even if they kill me, even if they can kill my body they will never kill the name... I was born in politics and I will die in politics'*.¹² That night (7 September 1980) Saul Ndzumo was arrested by Idutywa Police for obstructing section six of the Terrorism Act of 1967.

The Terrorism Act of 1967 was one of the most common laws used by police to arrest individuals during [Apartheid](#). The law's vague definition states that it *'prohibits terroristic activities and to amend the law relating to criminal procedure; and the provide for other incidental matters'*. More specifically, he was arrested for section six, which enables the government to allow the police to arrest any individual in South Africa on the belief that they are a terrorist or withholding information that may aid to helping in catching a terrorist. Additionally, police are able to arrest without a warrant and detain for as long as they deem necessary, until they believe the individual has satisfactorily answered all their questions. Also, the Minister must be aware of the detainee's information: name, where he is being held, and why he is being held. Yet, no one else may know the information on the detainee. Lastly, the commissioner must update the Minister every month with a reason for the individual being

¹¹ ANC, "Deaths in Detention, *SECHABA: Official Organ of the African National Congress*, January 1982, 13, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/DC/sejan82/SeJan82.pdf>.

¹² S Ndzumo, East London (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Human Rights Violations Submissions - Questions and Answers), <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrve11/ndzumo.htm>.

held.¹³ This allowed the government to keep their arrests private. Officers used this section of the Terrorism Act to their advantage after they arrested Ndzumo.

Ndzumo's time in jail was very brief, only spending two days in jail, however with the strict privacy law regarding his location and his arrest, it became very hard for his family to figure out where Saul was and what condition he was in. Sithilufu explained this in the TRC trial. He stated that the morning after Ndzumo was arrested he went to

'Bothastown to the offices where he was working. On my arrival, I met a certain man and I asked him the information, I wanted to know the information of the police... he asked me where am I heading to. I said to him I want to trace my father. He said no, don't worry... [then] I went back home to explain to my mum what happened...I went home without any trace'.¹⁴

The following day, 10 September 1980, Ndzumo was found dead in his cell in Idutywa.¹⁵ The exact cause of his death is not known due to the uncertainty of the events that occurred during his time in jail, yet the vague answer is he died due to excessive bleeding and a blood clot in the brain.¹⁶ His family believes this was caused by torture due to the condition Ndzumo's body was in, when they eventually saw him. His son, Sithifulu stated:

'his face was swollen, it looked as if he had been beaten... [his] arms were raised up as if he has been handcuffed. When burying him we had to press the hands to their position. We couldn't manage to take them to its position we were forced to bend them.'¹⁷

¹³ Republic of South Africa, 'Terrorism Act 1967, Act No. 83 of 1967,' 1967, <http://www.aluka.org/stable/10.5555/al.sff.document.leg19670621.02>

¹⁴ S Ndzumo, East London (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Human Rights Violations Submissions - Questions and Answers), <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrve11/ndzumo.htm>.

¹⁵ 'Ndzumo dead in cell,' *Africa: Semi-Weekly Interafrican News Survey*, September 12, 1980.

¹⁶ TRC, 'Synopsis of cases heard at the first Public Hearings of the TRC at East London 15-18 April 1996,' TRC: Janet Cherry Collection, http://truth.wvl.wits.ac.za/doc_page.php?did=1201&li=&zm=zoomsearch&zoom_highlight=NDZUMO.

¹⁷ S Ndzumo, East London (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Human Rights Violations Submissions - Questions and Answers), <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrve11/ndzumo.htm>.

Seeing Saul in this state, convinced his family to hire a doctor to perform a post mortem. Once the Prime Minister heard of this, he insisted on having dinner with the doctor. By two p.m. the following day, the doctor came back and conducted the autopsy. He found that Ndzumo died solely of a brain haemorrhage, the lack of blood flow to the brain. This knowledge encouraged the family to continue an investigation for justice for his death. The family hired Mr. Skewiya in Durban to advocate for Ndzumo yet, once he arrived he was put in jail for unknown reasons. Three days later Mr. Skewiya was released, deported, and the case was not brought up again until 1996.¹⁸

Ndzumo's family requested that the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) investigate his death. In 1996, Ndzumo's case was considered by the TRC, in hopes that his family could find closure for his abrupt death. In addition to closure, the TRC investigation could leave his family with financial support in reparations, as a way for the government to recognize the stress and burden that accompanied the loss of their loved-one. Ndzumo's son, Sithilifu, suggested that reparations were very crucial to his family, as he was struggling financially. He further explained that his father had left him some land, yet because he had children that needed to go to school and needed a house, he was unable to afford both, rather he asked that the commission's reparations would be able to cover the cost of one, as both the house and his children's education were highly important.¹⁹ The TRC did not find any other additional information on Ndzumo's death.

¹⁸ S Ndzumo, East London (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Human Rights Violations Submissions - Questions and Answers), <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrve11/ndzumo.htm>.

¹⁹ S Ndzumo, East London (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Human Rights Violations Submissions - Questions and Answers).

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