

I, Sheena Cook currently a detainee in the Buka Holding Cells since 20 February 2023, hereby wish to submit the following information as an accurate account of the manner in which I was apprehended, arrested and detained. I believe that what I have endured is deemed to be a violation of my Liberty as a woman and as a human being.

1. Therefore I hereby state:

- 1) On Monday 20th of February 2023, I was in Arawa Town. In the afternoon I went to visit my cousin sister and her five young children at her Country Club residence. I had dinner with them and at about 7.30pm I helped put the little ones to sleep.
- 2) My sister's house has no means of electricity. She uses small battery lamps in the night. She asked me to stay with the little ones while she and her second born went to the canteen to collect her mobile phone which she had left on the charger earlier that day to be charged
- 3) When she left I went into the house and closed the door and lay down with the four little girls. It wasn't long after that there was a knock on the door. I sat up and noticed a lot of bright lights outside and heavy footsteps. There was a second knock and a male person called my name. I recognized the voice as Police Officer A (PO A). I didn't reply at first because I was trying to get my sister's baby to go back to sleep; she had been woken by the loud knock on the door.
- 4) I recognized the voice that was calling me, however this was a civilian house and he should have immediately identified himself as a police officer, and without hesitation state his purpose there.
- 5) I opened the door and as I did bright lights were shone at me and I saw 2 (two) rifles being pointed at me so I immediately put my hands out so they could see I was unarmed.
- 6) PO A instructed me to move away from the door and stand in the yard. I did so and then I was instructed to stand still along a small track that leads from the house to the main road.
- 7) My sister's children had been awakened by all the noise and when they saw me being led away at gun point they began to cry. There was no one to comfort them.
- 8) PO A was in the company of many other police officers, but it was very dark and I could only recognize a few of them.
- 9) PO A then, when I was standing in the yard, told me to put my hands in the air. I did so and he began to physically search my body. He touched my buttocks and the underside of my arms asking for my phone. He hadn't yet stated why they were there, they didn't have a warrant in hand to take my phone so when he asked for it I told him I didn't have one.
- 10) The male officer had no rights to put his hands on my body and search me. They had already been in my presence for more than five (5) minutes and yet they still hadn't stated their purpose there. I decided to stay calm, keep my mouth shut and cooperate thinking this would all be made clear to me when we got to Arawa Police Station.
- 11) After being searched I was lead along a path to where the police vehicle was parked. My sister and her daughter who had gone to collect her phone were standing at the end of the path.

- 12) I stopped to talk to my sister but I was pushed along by the officer walking behind me. I heard my sister cry in the dark and I called to her, telling her not to worry and everything was going to be OK.
- 13) I was then instructed to get into the Police vehicle, being a light blue troop carrier allocated to the Police Station Commander of Arawa Police station. In the back with me was Police Officer B (PO B), offside was PO A and the driver was Inspector C (I C)
- 14) When the vehicle was being driven out of the Country Club road, I thought we would be going to the Arawa Police Station but it wasn't so. The vehicle turned right towards the Tunuru Junction. At this point I was starting to get confused and a little frightened, but still I remained silent. Not one of those three Police Officers even bothered to tell me what was going on.
- 15) The vehicle travelled toward Tunuru Junction and was parked on the traffic island in the road. PO A got down and was talking on his mobile phone. I was frightened now as I had absolutely no idea what was going on.
- 16) I saw a vehicle approach from the direction of Loloho and stopped on the other side of the road. PO A walked over to talk to the occupants of the vehicle. I couldn't make out whether it was a Police vehicle or a civilian one. The vehicle then drove off and PO A came back talking on his phone.
- 17) A few minutes passed and I saw the lights of another vehicle approaching from Loloho. This vehicle now stopped and parked behind the Police vehicle I was in. PO A then instructed me to get down and stand still.
- 18) I got down and stood between the two vehicles. PO A again put his hands on my body, searched me from shoulder to thigh, including my buttocks again asking for my phone. I told him I had thrown it away in the bush.
- 19) After the thorough search PO A lead me to the other vehicle which was a dark blue unmarked 10 seater. When I got in the driver took off towards Morgan Junction.
- 20) In the vehicle, when my eyes became accustomed to the dimness, I recognised the officers I was seated amongst. The driver was Sergeant D, on the offside was Senior Constable E, Senior Constable F, Sergeant G, Constable H and Sergeant I (Prosecutor, Prosecuting my cases.)
- 21) When I recognised them I asked what was going on, why was I being transported in the night like this. All that I was told was that they were acting on directives that they had been given to transport me to Buka. Not one of them told me the reasons.
- 22) We arrived at Kokopau shortly after 11pm and we were ferried to Buka by "Buka Babe". We then drove into the Police station where SI took me to the counter area. Together with Inspector J, SI and Cell guard F/C K took me to the cells where I was locked in the female cell block. The three of them then left. I asked what was going on and was told by I P that what I wanted to say I would have my chance to explain it in court
- 23)
  - i. The reasons for my arrest was not explained to me
  - ii. I was not formally cautioned/informed of my rights before being placed in custody.
  - iii. I was not shown a warrant of any sort to justify my arrest.
  - iv. I have been a Police officer for 23 yrs. I am more than well versed in Police procedures during arrest and detention.

- v. It is beyond my understanding as to why I was treated as such.
- 24) When I was taken into custody all I had were the clothes I was wearing. I was never given the chance to get a change of clothing, or notify family of children that I was being taken in to custody. I was with the same clothing for weeks until other female detainees left the cells and passed a few clothing items to me.
- 25) From the 20th February 2023 to 7 March 2023 (15) fifteen days, I was detained without being cautioned/informed of my rights or any form of charges being laid against me.
- 26) I have been confined in Buka Holding Cells for over six (6) months now. My warrant to be moved to the C S facility is being held by Police. This is an abuse of process. I have not committed a major criminal offence to be treated like a high risk prisoner.
- 27) For the period of time in custody I have been denied access to natural sunlight. This has caused the natural colour of my skin to fade leaving me more vulnerable to contract skin cancer when I am later exposed to direct sunlight. I have also been denied visitation from family and friends up until this date.
- 28) Worst of all I have been denied any form of communication with my children who are both still in school. The younger boy is in Gr 10. He has been forced to withdraw from Arawa Secondary School due to non-completion of school fees. His education has been affected by whatever issue it is the management of the BPs have with me. I requested several times to be escorted to Teachers Savings and Loans to withdraw the school fee amount, but my request was denied outright.
- 29) Points of Concern being raised:
- i. I was taken from a civilian residence in the night, at gun point, in front of four children (all girls) less than 10 yrs of age, by men who failed to identify themselves.
  - ii. I was physically searched by a male officer, twice.
  - iii. I was transported to Buka in the night which is a 3 – 4 hr drive in the company of only male officers.
  - iv. I was not informed of the reasons for my arrest in Arawa.
  - v. I was taken into the cells without being cautioned or told of my rights.
  - vi. I was left in the cells for 15 days without being cautioned or charged.
  - vii. I was prohibited from communicating with anyone.
  - viii. I was denied to a change of clothes for weeks.
  - ix. Warrant to be remanded in (CS) custody is being withheld by Buka Police Commander for reasons unknown to me.
  - x. I have been in confinement for over six (6) months without access to natural sunlight, fresh air and a decent diet.
  - xi. My children have suffered because my rights have been denied by police

I, Sheena Cook, solemnly swear that the information given in this document is true to the best of my knowledge. I wrote it knowing that if it is examined, I will be liable to prosecution if I have stated anything false or misleading.

Original signed by Sheena Cook, 6/8/23