

Transkeians give their views on attacks

It's criminal in fairest Kei

GRACED WITH magnificent beaches, rivers full of trout and dramatic scenic beauty, Transkei is a potential magnet for tourists. However, white South Africans, who make up 87 percent of visitors to the region, are being scared off by an apparent wave of racist crime.

That there have been attacks on white people is a fact. In the past year there have been 10 incidents in which whites travelling through or on holiday in the area have been ambushed, murdered, robbed, abducted, chased or had their vehicles hijacked.

Among the worst incidents was the gruesome ambush in which Grahamstown attorney Allistair Weakley and his brother Glen were murdered while they were returning from an Easter fishing trip between Sinangwana and Port St Johns.

Since then there have been isolated incidents, a number occurring in the Qumbu area, about 58 kilometres from Umtata.

Numerous cancellations of tourist bookings have been the result. Companies running luxury buses are among those who have opted for increased costs and greater distances to avoid routes through the Transkei and the attendant threat of attacks on vehicles and passengers.

Police have attempted to reassure tourists and travellers about their safety in the region. However, they have not been notably successful in apprehending those responsible for the violence.

Transkei military ruler Bantu Holomisa admitted as much in a recent statement. He said the Transkei police force was "lagging far behind" its counterparts "in terms of manpower, strength and modern equipment". He said the ruling Military Council was exploring ways and means of upgrading the force, which needed to be increased in size "to deal effectively with the menace of the rising crime rate".

Transkei Tourism Board executive member Clive Berlyn thinks the attacks are motivated



by the fact that "whites are seen as richer targets". While "robbery is the motive" in most attacks, he points out that it would be naive to see them in isolation from the political unrest occurring in the whole of South Africa.

Others living in Transkei are more puzzled.

Sipho Ndunge, a 28-year-old teacher, said: "I would be lying if I said I knew the cause of these killings. I can't base them on anything. I don't think people must be killed. There is no difference between killings in the Transkei and killings in Katshepo. They must all be condemned with the contempt they deserve. I hope things will settle after the elections."

By **THANDO DALAMBA**

Civil servant Thandi Ngcwabe, 30, thinks the attacks are part of the legacy of apartheid. "People are exercising some kind of revenge. However, these killings are bad. I'm unhappy because the people killed are innocent and have an interest in blacks. That's why they come here. To ensure the safety of tourists and travellers, security forces should escort them."

Nonkqubo Qangule, a 21-year-old student, agrees that revenge might be part of the motivation. "I don't know why people do it. Maybe they are revenging themselves

somehow. If that's how they reflect their anger they must do it but, personally, I wouldn't."

Computer specialist Peter Jacobs, 25, thinks the attacks have something to do with anger about the apartheid system "but I don't know why people must still be angry", he adds. He doesn't think the attacks are "just a racial thing", nor that they are planned.

"I've been in Transkei for five years and am white but I'm not perturbed," he says. "Transkei must be reincorporated. We must work together rather than kill one another."

A 40-year-old policeman who wanted to remain anonymous had this to say: "There is no single case in which political organisations claimed responsibility. These killings are carried out by ordinary criminals.

"People are hungry. They think and think about ways to overcome hunger and find no answer except resorting to crime. Whites are thought of as rich. Yes, relatively, some are. Beefing up the police force won't help. Look, South Africa is a police state but it has a far higher crime rate! There must be job opportunities."

According to 22-year-old journalist George Galanakis, however, the whole furore can be put down to the fact that "people like to make something out of nothing".

Thando Dalamba is a freelance journalist based in Transkei.