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**BRIEFING NOTE ON URGENT COMMUNICATION FILED WITH UNITED NATIONS  
EXPERT CONCERNING THREATS AGAINST FORMER PRESIDENT OF BOTSWANA**

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1. On 21 December 2021, Omnia Strategy LLP, the law firm of Cherie Blair CBE, QC, submitted an urgent communication to the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (the “UNSR”) on behalf of former President of Botswana Seretse Khama Ian Khama (“**President Khama**”), (the “**Communication**”).
2. President Khama’s Communication responds to the wholly inadequate and belated reply from the Government of Botswana dated 25 October 2021 (the “**Reply**”) filed seven months after the [Urgent Appeal](#) sent by the then UNSR, [Dr Agnes Callamard](#), dated 26 March 2021.
3. In her Urgent Appeal, the UN Special Rapporteur expressed serious concern about the reported risks to the life of former President Ian Khama. In particular, she stated:

*“I am particularly concerned at the reported attempts on Mr. Khama’s life by organs of the state corroborated by several sources. This is compounded by allegations that his security detail has been significantly reduced despite the risk to his life, and despite the concerns raised by Mr. Khama. I am further concerned that reportedly no steps have been taken to investigate the planned attempts on Mr. Khama’s life... I am equally concerned with the dismissive responses of the authorities to the allegations, indicating disconcerting disregard for the serious threats against Mr. Khama’s life.”*
4. Rather than allay the UNSR’s serious and clearly articulated concerns, Botswana’s Reply shows the Government’s unashamed determination to dismiss and ignore the urgent concerns raised by the United Nations. Further, to the extent the Government of Botswana engaged with the substance of the Urgent Appeal at all, its Reply reveals a woefully misguided or deliberately disingenuous approach to human rights and, in particular, its duty to protect the rights to life and personal security of its citizens.

5. [Cherie Blair CBE, QC](#), the Chair of Omnia Strategy and human rights counsel for President Khama, said:

*“Given the gravity of the issues at stake and raised by the UN Special Rapporteur, Botswana’s Reply signals a complete lack of respect for the rule of law and its international obligations, and a callous, politically motivated, disregard for the safety of President Khama. The UN Special Rapporteur must condemn this conduct in the strongest terms, and take urgent and robust action to guarantee President Khama’s safety.”*

6. The Communication and Omnia’s call for action comes at a moment when there are worrying, recent developments in President Khama’s case that reinforce the need for prompt and further action from the UNSR and the international community, notably:

- Botswana’s continued failure to ensure President Khama’s safety;
- Raids conducted recently by the Directorate on Intelligence and Security (the “**DIS**”) at premises belonging to President Khama, ostensibly justified by dubious “*national security*” arguments;
- Reports that the Head of the DIS has assured the President of Botswana that President Khama (and Former DIS Director Colonel Kgosi) would be “*behind bars before the end of the year*”, apparently irrespective of any evidence of wrongdoing;
- The arrest and detention of Colonel Kgosi;
- The interrogation by the DIS of the Head of President Khama’s private security team;
- Broader, growing, concerns regarding the DIS’s lack of any accountability for civilian harm; and
- An emerging pattern of State-sponsored suppression of free speech and dissent within Botswana.

7. At the time of writing, President Khama is in South Africa and, therefore, relatively safe. However, he cannot – and should not have to – remain abroad indefinitely purely to avoid threats to his personal safety at home in Botswana. As things stand, President Khama is due to return imminently to Botswana, where he will continue to participate lawfully in civic activities, as is his right, and will again be exposed to the violent campaign orchestrated against him.

8. Given the attempts and threats on President Khama’s life as detailed previously, and particularly given the Government of Botswana’s refusal to address substantively and investigate such

concerns (including when raised formally by the UNSR) and repeated recent efforts to search the President's properties on trumped up grounds, there is a very high risk of President Khama being taken into custody (or otherwise detained) on his return, on a spurious pretext and then harmed or killed. Even if President Khama is not seized by the authorities on a bogus basis, he remains vulnerable to physical interference by the State which has adopted a brazen and openly hostile attitude to him.

9. On behalf of President Khama, Omnia is urging the UNSR to intervene decisively and urgently, and to insist that Botswana accounts for its actions and omissions in breach of its international obligations, as set out in the Urgent Appeal and in the Communication.

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