

A PHOTO ESSAY
BY ALON SKUY

MASSACRE

AT
MARIKANA

ColdType



After the shooting: Policemen examine the bodies of dead miners.

Strikers facing police . . . knives against guns . . . witchcraft versus bullets . . .



**Dance of death:
Protestor
demonstrates
his prowess
with a machete
in front of
fellow miners**

There seemed to be a terrible inevitability as events unfolded on August 16, 2012, at Marikana Platinum Mine, near Rustenburg in the north-west of South Africa: Strikers against police. Knives against guns. Witchcraft against bullets. Scenes reminiscent of the darkest days of apartheid, reminding everyone that their Rainbow Nation has not progressed as far as they had hoped.



**Taking aim , a
cop opens fire
with rubber
bullets and
blocks off a
group of strikers
as they approach
the police line**

Marikana, owned by the British-based Lonmin company, was the scene of one of a series of wildcat strikes over demands for massive pay increases that had raged across the South African mining sector. The violence began on 11 August when two strikers were shot during clashes between police, Lonmin security, strikers, and the leadership of two warring trade unions. Over the next few days, eight more strikers, police and security personnel were

Over the next few days, eight strikers, police and security personnel died . . .



Lick this:
A striker tests
the blade of his
spear before
the battle
commences

killed in clashes.

The unrest reached its bloody climax on August 16, when 34 strikers were shot and killed, many of them shot in the back as they tried to flee a hail of bullets from heavily-armed police, while 78 more were injured.

The massacre, which took place on the 25th anniversary of a previous national miners' strike, was the most deadly use of violence by the South African security forces against its



Injured striker
raises himself
in agony as the
police check
the bodies of
the dead and
injured for
weapons

own civilians since the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, when 69 protesting inhabitants of a segregated township in Transvaal (now Gauteng) were killed by police gunfire. (It is worth pointing out, however, that the police at Sharpeville were faced by unarmed protesters wielding nothing more dangerous than cardboard passes, not a knife- and spear-brandishing mob, who'd earlier carved up a couple of cops.)

Al Jazeera reported that the strikers had

Miners were 'shot at close range or crushed by police vehicles . . . '



**Against all odds:
A striking miner gestures with a knife**

been forced by police in armoured vehicles with water cannons into an area surrounded by razor wire at which point the shooting began, although other witnesses, including a Reuters photographer, said a miner had opened the firing.

South African Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Greg Marinovich later examined the scene and found the majority of victims were shot 300 meters from police lines where the main



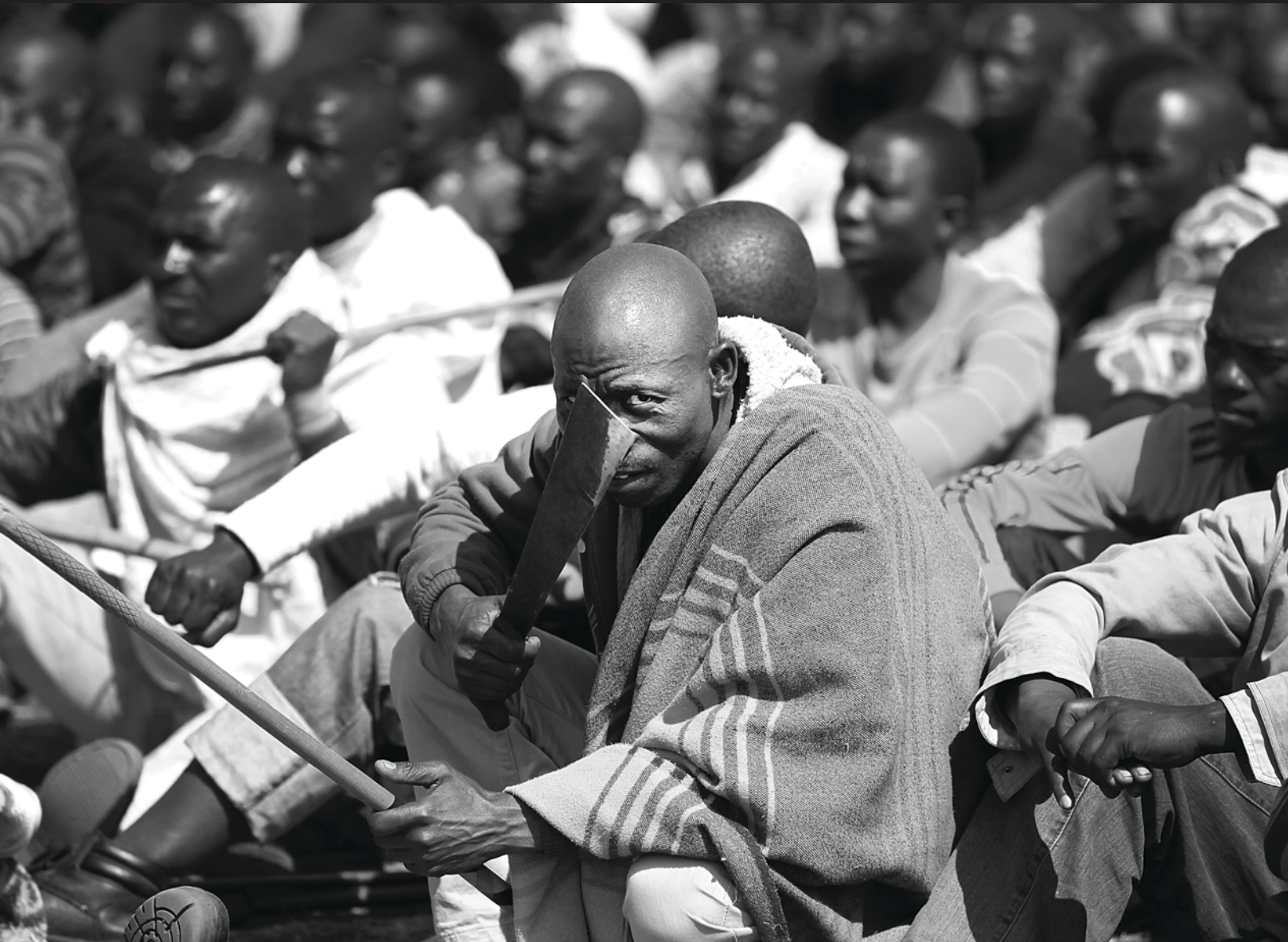
**Securing the scene:
Police check the bodies of dead and injured miners**

"charge" took place. He said some of the victims "appear to have been shot at close range or crushed by police vehicles."

270 strikers were arrested and charged with murder, the charges later dropped by the National Prosecuting Authority and the miners released.

our days after the tragedy, National Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega came under fire after she saluted the policemen who gunned

A 'warrior' group of miners had taken part in a black magic ritual . . .



Token gesture:
A man waves his machete, a weapon that is of little use against semi-automatic weapons

down the miners, "You did what you did because you were responsible: you were making sure that you continued with your role of ensuring that South Africans are safe, and that you equally are the citizens of this country and safety starts with you."

Evidence at an official inquiry into the 44 killings that took place during the strike, headed by retired Appeal Court judge Ian Gordon Farlam, implicates both sides. The police admitted



"the response of some police officers may have been disproportionate to the danger they faced from the group of more than 200 armed protesters", while evidence was also heard that a 'warrior' group of miners, armed with knives and machetes, had taken part in a black magic ritual as part of their plans to attack the police lines.

According to South Africa's Times newspaper, "The ritual involved the burning of a sheep alive

Ready for action:
There's no sign of resistance after the gunfire stops

'The last shot caught my testicles and caused me some severe injury . . .'



**Fearsome
weapon: The
blade is sharp
and deadly**

and mixing the remains with muti, and making small incisions in the men's bodies to give them the courage to confront the police, and make them immune to gunfire."

Other reports said that human body parts had been used in the ritual.

A striker, Mzoxolo Magidiwana, told the inquiry that, after being hit with police fire, "I could hear voices of policemen approaching the place where we had fallen. When they got to me, I

was again shot several times from close range whilst I was on the ground.

"I sustained further shots in my abdomen. The last shot caught my testicles and caused me some severe injury. I pleaded with the police to rather kill me and told them my relatives' name[s], so they could help identify my body."

In response to his plea to be finished off, the police officers told him he was going to die anyway. He said the policemen used their cellphones

**Dressed to kill:
Police move in,
their weapons
ready to fire**

'How can this happen in a country . . . dedicated to protecting our people . . .'



Killing machine:
Angry gestures
from a crowd
of miners about
to storm the
police line

to take photographs of the bodies lying around, while laughing. Others kicked the bodies.

Ronnie Kasrils, ANC Minister of Intelligence in Nelson Mandela's post-apartheid government, commenting about this and other cases of police brutality, said, "In 1994, we established a police service – not a police force. That was reversed in 2009 with a repugnant military ranking system. The constant attacks on protesters, the "shoot to kill" exhortations of police officials, the



Killing field:
Policeman
walks through
the scene of the
massacre

numerous reports of police corruption, the use of conspiracy theories to deal with opponents of government and the move to strengthen the powers of the government security cluster by dubious means – all this worried me.

"How can this happen in a country where the constitution and Bill of Rights is dedicated to protecting the safety of our people?"

The inquiry is expected to end in June.

– Tony Sutton

The Photographer



ALON SKUY (32) began his career as a photographer after completing a course at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg. After working as a freelance photographer for the Star, Saturday Star and Sunday Independent newspapers, he became a full time photographer for the Star in December 2006, and later moved to the Times, of Johannesburg, where he is Chief Photographer.

These photographs are part of a portfolio that earned Skuy first prize in the newspaper picture story category at the recent Pictures of the Year International's awards. The contest attracted 48.000 entries.

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