

**UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT**

**UDF UNITES! APARTHEID DIVIDES!**



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# **FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UDF** **20 AUGUST 1987**

## **FOUR FIGHTING YEARS**

August 20 is the fourth anniversary of the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). During four fighting years the UDF has managed to draw together disparate and often unco-ordinated forces in the mass-based democratic movement into a mighty national anti-apartheid front. The UDF has united and organised the people of South Africa in their struggles - in the schools, factories, bantustans, townships, churches, farms and sportsfields - and it has constantly endeavoured to mobilise the broadest possible range of forces, black and white, against apartheid rule.

### **The Freedom Charter**

Formed to oppose and discredit Botha's "new deal" tricameral parliament and black local authorities, the Front has moved with its affiliates and the people to taking up a wide range of political issues. The UDF's transformation from an issue based front to an anti-apartheid people's front necessitated the adoption of a clear political programme. It is for this reason the UDF will adopt the Freedom Charter on 20 August, believing that the Charter has widespread support, represents the minimum demands of the people as a whole and poses an unchallenged vision of a future non-racial and democratic South Africa.

The majority of the Front's 700 affiliates have already adopted the Charter, including the 500 000 strong SAYCO. The Charter unites affiliates and non-affiliates, in particular COSATU. Growing numbers of professional, sports and religious organisations recognise the Charter as the authentic expression of the demands of the majority. The UDF firmly believes that the Freedom Charter is fast becoming the programme of national unity of all those opposed to the Nationalists.

Presidents: Albertina Sisulu,  
Archie Gumede  
Executive chairperson: Curnick Ndlovu

National Treasurer: Azhar Cachalia  
National Publicity Secretary: Mosiuoa Terror Lekota  
National Secretary: Popo Molefe

## **WHAT HAVE BEEN THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UDF IN THE PAST YEAR?**

Despite the massive onslaught against the Front, and associated setbacks, the democratic movement has managed to make significant advances over the past year. The blanket of censorship and disinformation has to a certain extent enabled the state to selectively project our setbacks, and to mute the advances which have been made:

### **\*National united action**

Over the past year the UDF has come to play the role of a political centre in the legal opposition movement against apartheid and the National Party repression. The Front, at a national, regional and local level, has united and given direction to struggles of the workers, students, youth, women, the rural poor and those opposed to the Bantustans, white democrats and township residents.

At every available opportunity it has expressed the political demands of the majority of South Africans, both here and abroad, outlining the conditions for negotiation and the way forward to peace and progress.

With the imposition of the national State of Emergency on 12 June 1986 the apartheid regime launched the severest and most methodical attack ever against the democratic movement. Launched in October of 1986, the **Campaign for National United Action**, spear-headed by the UDF, Cosatu, the NECC and the SACC, was geared to uniting all forces opposed the regime and enabling anti-apartheid forces to re-group. The basis of this campaign was unity in action at a local, regional and national level around the demands of: an end to the Emergency; the release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners; the unbanning of the ANC and all banned organisations; the re-opening of the schools and the repeal of draconian controls placed on students; an end to rent evictions; freedom of expression and association and a living wage for workers, an end to retrenchments, jobs for all, adequate social security and the right to strike.

The first major activity of this campaign was the **Christmas Against the Emergency Campaign** between 16 and 26 December. During those ten days the lights went off in millions of homes as people lit candles in protest against the Emergency. The state responded by first preventing particular newspapers from advertising or issuing statements related to the campaigns, this later being extended to any reporting on the progress of the campaigns and covering the whole country.

On 8 January, amongst other things, advertisements were placed in major newspapers calling for the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, catching the state napping and eliciting a great response both inside and outside the country.

In March UDF affiliates marked National Detainees Day, showing that detentions and detention conditions were a significant rallying point in the communities. Work around the area of repression continued to be an important part of the Front's work during the year.

Following the largest ever work stayaway spearheaded by Cosatu and backed by the UDF on 1 May (May Day), the call went out for mass resistance to the whites only election on 5 and 6 May. In the biggest stayaway of its kind, workers, residents, church-goers, traders stayed at home for the Two Days of National Protest against the whites-only elections, showing their utter rejection of minority rule.

In June the Front called for two weeks of national action and protest from **12 June to 26 June**. Significant dates that fell between that period were 12 June (imposition of the Emergency), 16 June (South African Youth Day) and 26 June (Freedom Charter Day). On 12 June there was a one day fast by those inside and outside prison. A Declaration against the re-imposition of the Emergency was released signed by a broad range of organisations. June 16, despite a state disinformation campaign and the massive deployment of troops, was celebrated as a paid public holiday by hundreds of thousands of workers. The Front announced the start of its massive education campaign to popularise the Charter by placing advertisements in all national newspapers, and distributing media.

Two weeks ago an organisation to raise funds for the Front, Friends of the UDF was launched as part of the ongoing attempt to broaden support.

### **\* Rejecting Botha's "new deals"**

The UDF has led opposition to Botha's so-called "reforms". This year it rejected participation in the **National Statutory Council** on the basis that it upheld white minority domination, was undemocratic, that demands of the people for the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of organisations had not been met, it was being imposed in a climate of extensive political suppression and excluded all those living outside the urban areas. "No amount of political egg-dancing without facing the real issues will get the UDF and black people in this country to support these Nationalist-sponsored structures," said Morobe in July. The UDF made it

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clear that nothing less than one person, one vote in a united South Africa is acceptable. For that reason it was critical on several occasions of proposed elitist "solutions" such as the Natal/KwaZulu Indaba, federalism or other constitutional structures which are based on "group protection" and the bantustans.

The **Regional Services Councils** were also rejected, as behind their sham of "multi-racialism" and complicated system of indirect representation lay attempts to entrench local government structures such as the corrupt and shallow black local authorities and management committees which have long been rejected by communities throughout the country. The UDF pointed out that the RSC's underscored the concept of separate group areas.

The **tri-cameral parliament** was another focus for the Front. Apart from the May 5 and 6 Two Days of National Protest against the whites only elections, UDF affiliates in the white, Indian and coloured areas campaigned against the undemocratic and racist nature of the parliament and challenged parliamentarians in all three houses to resign. The Front noted that power had also shifted from the parliament to the State Security Council, the military and police and the shadowy network of Joint Management Committees. In a parliamentary by-election in Lenasia last month the Transvaal Indian Congress exposed the corrupt use of special votes, and once again the people demonstrated their rejection of the tri-cameral parliament.

In townships around the country the civic organisations and street committees both confronted the **black local authorities** and white township administrators, particularly around the issues of rent evictions and high electricity charges. The town councils continued to be isolated by the people, as residents refused to have anything to do with them, but rather demanded to speak directly to their masters.

### **\* Building unity**

The character of the UDF, now encompassing over 700 organisations, has changed over the last four years in the course of joint struggles from a front to a far more cohesive organisation. The energy that has been put into upholding democratic principles and ironing out internal divisions is shown by the fact that the Front is moving forward as a single force, and is poised to adopt the Freedom Charter.

Of the greatest significance in the past year has been the unity and co-operation between the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the UDF, and the increasing participation by workers in UDF structures

and campaigns. The trade unions and the UDF have participated in united national action throughout the year, while the UDF has thrown its weight behind worker struggles such as the SATs strike and the NUM struggle on the mines. The challenge that now faces the Front is to consolidate this unity, not only at the level of national campaigns and support for union struggles, but on a day to day basis in our struggles at the local level.

The Front has also worked to unite all democratic forces behind a united struggle against apartheid. The main components of the campaign for National United Action were the UDF, Cosatu, the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and it is supported by the SA Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC). At the same time the Front has consulted and met with a range of professional and trade organisations, in an attempt to establish good working relations with African traders, taverners and taxi drivers in the townships. The Front is finding that other organisations, including sports and religious organisations, are showing increasing interest in involving themselves in the campaigns of the UDF.

Also of much importance in the past year has been the rapid growth of cultural organisations resulting in plays and cultural activities opposed to apartheid, such as the SA Musicians Alliance and the newly formed Congress of South African Writers which have a close relationship with the UDF.

### **\*Growth of sectors**

The formation of national organisations in the youth and women sectors after years of work at a local and regional level marks a qualitative development in the struggle taking the level of organisation within the Front to a higher level.

The launch of the giant South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) at the end of March, with the estimated support of two million youth, acted as a source of inspiration to the Front as a whole and enabled growing cohesiveness. Of particular importance is the alliance that is developing between the youth organisations and the trade union movement.

On 25 April the UDF Women's Congress was formed, uniting all women's affiliates of the Front. An indication of the growth of unity and cohesion within the Front was that in both the Border and Western Cape competing women's organisations were united into single organisations. The question of organising and educating women is taken very seriously by the UDF, and key tasks of the Women's Congress will be raising women's issues in all UDF forums and striving for the fullest participation of women at all

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levels of the UDF.

School students are organising under extremely difficult conditions following the banning of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) and the fencing off of the schools by the army. Regional and local structures are being slowly and carefully rebuilt. The Border Student's Congress recently held a successful AGM and it is expected other regions will follow suit. The campuses remain a flashpoint of conflict. The South African National Student's Congress (SANSCO), formerly AZASO, has a rapidly growing membership. Rhodes University re-affiliated earlier this month to the National Union of South African Students (Nusas) which is also gaining support on the Afrikaans campuses.

### **\*Re-building organisation**

While the task of rebuilding organisation smashed or dispersed by the Emergency has been an uphill battle, and by no means over, the Front has made notable gains in several areas. Particular problems that face the Front have been the breakdown in co-ordination due to the Emergency and weaknesses in administration.

However, all evidence is that we can adapt and even forge ahead under oppressive conditions. This has been demonstrated by the holding of the UDF National Working Committee (NWC) at the end of May, held in secret, and attended by 200 delegates from nine regions to review policy and adopt a programme of action for the year ahead. It was also displayed by the secret launches of SAYCO and the UDF's Women's Congress.

At the local and regional levels the rebuilding and adaptation of UDF structures continues. In some areas organisations have had to be built, while in others affiliates have to be revived.

### **\*Rural resistance**

The second Emergency to a extent disrupted the mushrooming structures in the rural areas as overnight army camps were established next to hundreds of villages, activists detained and ordinary people terrorised. However, the tide of struggle in the bantustans continues to surge forward.

In KwaNdebele in May there was an resurgence of popular opposition to independence when the bantustan government again opted for it. There has also been extreme opposition, little reported, to Mangope's celebrations of ten years of independence, and general election, in Bophuthatswana.

### **\* Urban resistance**

Urban resistance to apartheid rule has taken on different forms under the highly repressive conditions. The rent boycotts in townships across the country have sustained themselves for over a year, constituting a serious challenge to the structures of apartheid rule. The people are strongly united against evictions, and different areas have responded to this threat by opening up houses again and replacing furniture, stay-at-homes to guard, and marches on the offices of the township administration.

UDF affiliates in the Western Cape have campaigned against high bus and taxi, while in Durban there have been demonstrations against increased rents in the so-called coloured and Indian areas. In Natal there have also been sporadic school boycotts because of army and vigilante activity, while UDF affiliates were prominent in the struggle to re-open Langa High School (Cape Town).

In the "grey areas" of Johannesburg and Durban (white-designated suburbs with a high population of black residents - believed to be about 50 000 in Johannesburg) residents living under the threat of Group Areas removal have started to organise themselves into flat committees to resist evictions, rent exploitation and bad services.

### **\*Dissension in the white laager**

In spite of the support for the National Party and the right-wing in the May 6 elections, the elections also gave impetus to the process whereby more whites are becoming disillusioned with parliamentary politics and are seeking answers from the democratic movement. The UDF continued to meet with Afrikaner intellectuals and white businessmen.

### **\*Work against repression**

The ongoing work of the UDF against repression in all its forms continued. The UDF affiliated Detainees Parent Support Committee (DPSC) and Descoms have been a constant thorn in the side of the government lobbying for the release of detainees and improved conditions in apartheid's jails, exposing and monitoring torture and helping and supporting detainees, their families and communities. UDF affiliates marked National Detainees Day on 12 March. The DPSC has also accepted human rights awards and been invited to a number of international conferences. A particular issue for the DPSC and other UDF affiliates this Emergency has been around the detention and maltreatment in jail of children and youth. In addition, detainees within prisons around the country have protested, and there have been several hunger strikes.

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The Front and all its affiliates also campaigned throughout the year for an end to the Emergency and the withdrawal of the troops and police from the townships. The UDF has also attempted to monitor and investigate atrocities and the general repression, publicising the unjust actions of the regime at home and abroad. A campaign against death squads and vigilantes has just been launched, while SAYCO is collecting signatures to "Save the 32" on death row.

**LONG LIVE THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT!  
FORWARD THE FREEDOM CHARTER!**