

SACC PRESS RELEASE

PROMOTION OF ORDERLY INTERNAL POLITICS BILL

Last week, with the gazetting of an order that effectively banned 17 organisations, and individuals, and prohibited many activists of Cosatu, the government attempted to close the doors on most anti-apartheid activities that were aimed at bringing non-violent change in South Africa.

This week, with the 'Promotion of Orderly Internal Politics Bill' to halt the financing of organisations that are assisting the victims of apartheid, the government wished to deliver the *coup de grace* to non-violent action, legal or illegal, on behalf of these victims.

The action last week already meant that organisations working for peace could not continue activities, even if they receive funds. Coupled with this week's Bill, it will mean that funds will probably not be forthcoming to organisations whose criteria for distributing the funds are to fight apartheid. Therefore the organisations that will continue to receive funds will largely be those that support, directly or indirectly, the apartheid system.

Doublespeak

What we have experienced in the state's rhetoric is a startling example of Orwellian doublespeak.

- A. A non-violent protest by church leaders and clerics to protest against the banning of organisations is seen as making a choice for violence.
- B. The government, who initiated the state of emergency and thereby detained and silenced community leaders who wished to negotiate and protest through legal channels, now justifies its latest draconian legislation by placing the responsibility for the state of emergency on the shoulders of the victims of this emergency.
- C. Individuals who were working for peace in KTC in Cape Town and Natal were singled out for restriction notices, e.g. Mrs Sisulu and Mr Archie Gumede. Peace here became a threat to government law and order.
- D. Funds which were channelled to South Africa from the EEC for work for peaceful change are now threatened to be cut off through sanctions applied by the South African government.

Indeed, if one looks at two parts of the Bill, i.e.

- A. Clause 16 — which states that it is an offence for anyone to say or do anything which causes hostility between different national, cultural or religious groups or hurts or insults members of the group or incites violence against them.
- B. The remainder of the Bill which is aimed at ensuring that 'political aims and objects ought to be pursued in the Republic without interference, monetary or otherwise, from abroad' one should most logically and rationally deduce that the organisation that would need to be acted upon is the Nationalist government-party, for no other

grouping is as responsible for causing so much hostility between race groups by law as the National government, and the South African government relies on monetary loans for its operations, which are political, and many of which are against the victims of the apartheid policy.

Implications

The SACC is aware that it might become a target if the latest Bill becomes law, depending on what the definition of political is. The restrictions are to prevent any political activity being financed from abroad, and the non-violent work of the SACC — according to the government's definition — may be seen as political. This is evident from the fact that the 'political activities' that Cosatu last week was prohibited from performing are, according to the Church, central to the proclamation of the Gospel in our country. To quote from the church leaders' statement of 25th February 1988:

'We must make it quite clear that, no matter what the consequences, we will continue as a matter of course to campaign for the release of prisoners, to call for clemency for those under sentence of death, to call for the unbanning of our political organisations, to call for negotiations involving the true leaders of our country to bring about a transfer of power from a minority to all the people of our country, to commemorate significant events in the life of our nation, to commemorate those who have died in what the state calls 'riots', and to call upon the international community to apply pressure to force the government to the negotiating table. Our mandate to carry out these activities comes from God and no man and no government will stop us. If the state wants to act against the church of God in this country for proclaiming the Gospel, then so be it.'

Overruling the Law

If the Bill is passed, the concept and practice of humanitarian law in South Africa is further eroded in many ways:

- A. Inspectors can search organisations without warrants.
- B. There is a clause excluding any court action to declare the Minister's restriction notice invalid.
- C. Organisations who use their funds for legal aid to 'political organisations' may well be restricted.
- D. The retrospective nature of the Bill, which makes allowance for money to be seized from restricted organisations or individuals that was in their possession before the restriction, according to the registrar's sifting of what he thinks will be used for political activities, is alarming.
- E. Provision is also made for the prosecution of anybody who attends or remains present at any gathering or

f • exhibition where emblems or slogans are shown that the minister might identify in the Government Gazette as having the effect of fomenting hostility or violence. This 'remote control' responsibility is a very controversial issue in law and was highlighted recently in the Sharpeville Six case.

All these actions seem to be pushing our chances of achieving peaceful change in this country further and further away. The SACC, however, is committed and bound by its belief in Christ and His call to work for justice and peace unceasingly.

We therefore call on the international community, in the

light of the government's sanctions against the internal organisations working desperately for peaceful change, to apply direct mandatory sanctions against this apartheid regime.

We appeal to them in God's name to use this as a necessary resort, to prevent more desperate violence on the part of our people as they see all paths to peaceful change systematically closed.

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