SOUTH AFRICA - Deepening Tensions and Menace

For God's sake, for the sake of life, come to our rescue
- the Rev Dr Frank Chikane

The general secretary of the South African Council of Churches was speaking on 10 March to the annual conference of the Black Sash women's organization. He called for white South Africans to enter actively into opposition to the Pretoria regime on the side of their fellow black South Africans who are bearing the brunt of the ever-increasing repression in their country. Dr Chikane's plea was also addressed to the outside world.

Pretoria today cracked down on the Committee for the Defence of Democracy which had been formed only this week to replace those organizations banned on 24 February. CDD's very existence and its planned protest rally for tomorrow at the University of the Western Cape near Cape Town were forbidden. CDD's forming members included Archbishop Desmond Tutu; the Rev Dr Allan Boesak of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; the Most Rev Stephen Naidoo, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town; Ms Mary Burton, president of Black Sash; Dullah Omar of the banned United Democratic Front; Dr Jakes Gerwel, rector of the University of the Western Cape.

Archbishop Naidoo was one of the Catholic prelates who took turns (because of strict laws against street demonstrations) standing with posters calling for the restoration of human rights on the steps of the Catholic cathedral in Johannesburg.

Dr Boesak's office and home were targets of stoning and brick throwing two days ago. More ominously, the following morning a phone call to his unlisted number by an anonymous person directly threatened the Reformed Church leader and his family. The caller said - in Afrikaans: 'You know what happened last night. That was just a warning. We will kill you. You've got to stop with your nonsense and you had better watch out for your wife and children.' Dr Boesak said he had not reported these incidents to the police because he had no confidence in them.

This past week has seen rising calls for Pretoria to silence Archbishop Tutu. The pro-regime THE CITIZEN wrote: 'Archbishop Tutu is just asking for trouble and perhaps the authorities will this time oblige.' The law and order spokesman for the growing-in-political-strength Conservative Party said: 'He (Tutu) should at least be stopped from saying more, but he should also be punished for what he has said in the past' A police officer commented: 'Give the guy enough rope and he will hang himself in terms of public opinion.' All the above named turbulent priests are prime targets - for official or for unofficial vengeance.

CABLES and MESSAGES of SOLIDARITY

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