

# Help Free South African Political Prisoner



Amon Msane, a member of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers of South Africa and chief steward at the 3M Company's plant near Johannesburg, was arrested at 1:00 am February 19 in front of his wife and three children. Msane was taken to Modderbee Prison in Springs outside of Johannesburg where he is currently being held.

On March 31 a judge in Johannesburg turned down Msane's lawyers' motion to dismiss the charges. The judge ruled that, although the authorities have no evidence to link Msane to any wrong doing, under the South African emergency law none is needed. The police have the right to arrest anyone if they believe that doing it will shorten the state of emergency.

The judge admitted that it did not matter if the officers' reasons were factually correct—it only mattered that they claimed Msane's arrest would help maintain law and order.

Msane is well known in the U.S. for his work in building international ties between workers in South Africa and in this country. In February 1986, he led a walk out of 300 Black workers at 3M's South Africa plant in solidarity with their union brothers and sisters at the 3M plant in Freehold, New Jersey, whose plant was closing. After this strike Msane toured the U.S., speaking about the need for international solidarity. When he returned to South Africa he was arrested and held for four weeks until an international campaign resulted in his release.

Last November, Msane returned to the U.S. to speak at the Labor Notes conference in Detroit. There, he emphasized the importance of cooperation among workers who work for the same multinational corporations.

Many of Msane's supporters believe that this second arrest was the result of this second visit. They also believe that he was arrested because the officers were angered that he was released after "only" four weeks detention last time, and because of his increasing prominence in the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa.

In the U.S., a number of things are being done to secure the activist's release. Letters are being sent to the 3M company. Amnesty International has taken up his case, and a coalition of religious and labor leaders in St. Paul, Minnesota (3M's home town) is trying to meet with the company to discuss the situation. Resolutions were brought to the 3M's stockholders meeting on May 12, calling for the company to intervene on Msane's behalf.

Up to now 3M has shown some interest in this case. It is providing Msane's wife with his salary while in prison, after being pressured by the South African union movement. However, more pressure is needed to make sure it does all it can to secure Msane's release. There are a number of things that you can do:

- write the 3M Company (or send the message below) to ask that it pressure the South African government to release Msane: Allen Jacobson, Chairman of the Board, 3M Company—General Offices, St. Paul, MN 55144.
- write the South African embassy to demand Msane's release: Ambassador Herbert Beukes, Embassy of South Africa, 3051 Massachusetts NW, Washington, DC 20005;
- publicize Amon Msane's arrest in union newsletters and among co-workers;
- get your local union to pass a resolution or circulate a petition supporting Msane.

Last July, Amon Msane was freed after international protests to 3M and the South African Embassy. This is the only way that he will be freed again. Please do what you can to demand his release.

For more information contact Labor Notes 313/883-5580 or the Labor Institute 212/674-3322.

Stanley Fischer, President, OCAW Local 8-760  
Bill Henning, NY Labor Cttee Against Apartheid  
The Labor Institute  
Labor Notes

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Mr. Allen Jacobson  
3M General Offices  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55144

Dear Mr. Jacobson:

On February 19, Amon Msane, a worker at your 3M plant in South Africa, was arrested and is still being held.

Please do everything in your power to secure Amon Msane's release. For instance, I urge you to visit South Africa to see the conditions of the workers there, and to intervene directly on Mr. Msane's behalf.

Please notify me about what your company is doing in this manner.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_