LEADER OF CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO TOUR U.S.

Audrey Coleman, a leader of the drive to free over 30,000 people imprisoned in South Africa without charge or trial in the past year, will be in New York from Monday June 29 through Wednesday July 1. Mrs. Coleman is a founding member and leader of the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (DPSC) which has launched a campaign for the release of the detainees. They have highlighted the treatment of children, some as young as five, who make up nearly half the prisoners.

The South African government threatened to bar Mrs. Coleman's trip to the U.S. They relented only after strong protests from French President Francois Mitterand and the U.S. State Department.

Mrs. Coleman is no stranger to indefinite detention without charge or trial. Two of her four sons have been jailed for their political activities. She works full time for the DPSC in Johannesburg counseling recently released detainees and the families of those still in prison. The DPSC provides the parents, brothers, sisters and wives of the political prisoners with advice on how to find out which prison their relatives are in, to arrange medical treatment if necessary and to appeal for their release. In 1986, the South African government unsuccessfully sought to prevent Mrs. Coleman from continuing her work with the DPSC.

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Prior to joining the campaign to release the detainees, Mrs. Coleman worked with the Black Sash, a humanitarian organization of white women which has dealt extensively with the laws requiring black South Africans to carry a pass at all times. At an international conference in Sweden last year she exposed the detention and torture of children in South Africa. Earlier this year, she received a human rights award from the French government. Mrs. Coleman is 54 years old and lives in Johannesburg with her husband Max, who is also active in the DPSC.

While in New York Mrs. Coleman will be available for interviews on detention and torture in South Africa and the general political situation in that country. The South African government's press censorship has made it extremely difficult for the U.S. news media to report on these topics.

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enclosures: Detroit Free Press December 9, 1976 article on Audrey Coleman
New York Times June 3, 1987 article quoting Audrey Coleman
Earl Caldwell column from N.Y. Daily News on husband Max Coleman
Africa Fund brochure, "Unlock Apartheid's Jails"
South Africa's stepping up pressure on white activists

By Larry Olmstead

Johannesburg, South Africa

When white activist Audrey Coleman returns from a visit to London in about two weeks, the government likely will have something waiting for her—an order restricting her involvement in political activities.

"They came by and tried to serve it on her the other day," said her husband, Max, a businessman who also is an anti-apartheid activist. "It was dated for Nov. 28 and listed the specific organizations she could not be involved in and certain campaigns she could not take part in."

The Coleman's are familiar with police action against dissidents, having interviewed and helped hundreds of imprisoned activists with their Detainees Parents Support Committee. Two sons have been jailed for activist work.

But Max Coleman said restriction orders are a new wrinkle, part of a stepped-up campaign against dissidents, which is increasingly targeting whites.

Last week, UDF Treasurer Azhar Cachalia was restricted, as was Ashwin Shah, a regional leader of the UDF and its affiliated Transvaal Indian Congress. Activists say the restrictions, and about 24,000 detentions made since the state of emergency began June 12, show the government's desire to clamp down on any criticism other than that which comes from opposition parties in Parliament.

"The government doesn't like opposition of any sort, especially anything that is uniting," said Jill de Vlieg, a member of the Black Sash civil rights group who was jailed the first day of the emergency and released 37 days later.
De Vlieg, who is white, said the government strategy had a good chance of succeeding in the short-term. "On the whole, it will increase the fear in the white population," she said.

Attempts to obtain comment from police on the restriction orders were unsuccessful. A Bureau for Information spokeswoman, who declined to be quoted by name, said the use of the restriction device did seem to be increasing and probably was a more pleasant alternative to detention.

Coleman said the government in the previous state of emergency — from July 1985 through March 1986 — had used restriction orders on many people, but mostly as they were being released from detention.

Now, he said, restriction orders are being handed to people who have not been arrested.

Most of the orders have been imposed in Johannesburg. They typically don't restrict freedom of movement or require the person to report periodically to police, unlike the more familiar "banning" orders such as those under which Winnie Mandela once served.

Instead, they generally cover activity only in a certain community — Johannesburg, for instance. Each order lists several organizations in which activity is restricted, generally including the UDF, the End Conscription Campaign, the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee, and sometimes the detainees group and the Black Sash, which is run by white women.

The restriction orders specify the campaigns in which the person cannot participate, usually including those advocating the end of the state of emergency, protesting military conscription, speaking out against participation of mixed-raced coloreds and Indians in government, and other issues.

MAX COLEMAN said most emergency detentions were aimed either at top leaders or at young people. Restriction orders were a means of dealing with middle-level activists, he said.

Few would want to face the penalty for breaking the order or any other emergency regulation — 10 years in jail or a 20,000 rand fine, worth about $9,000 — Coleman said.

In the case of Audrey Coleman, 53, an outspoken mother of four who has emerged as among the most internationally visible and credible activist leaders during the last two emergencies, restrictions would be aimed at taking the harsh edge off some of her criticism, her husband said.

The stepped-up pressure on white activists under the current emergency has been noticeable.

Under the first emergency, few if any Black Sash members were arrested. Since June, however, at least nine Sash members have been restricted. Several members in Johannesburg and in eastern Cape Province have been arrested, including de Vlieg.

The End Conscription Campaign says 60 of its members have been detained under the current emergency, and most of the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee leadership is either in jail, restricted or in hiding, members say.

Coleman said that his wife has said that if she is restricted, she will take the government to court.

"None of these people who have been hit with these orders will pack it in," he said. "They are going to try to find ways to beat the system."
By JOHN D. BATTERSBY
Special to The New York Times

JOHANNESBURG, June 2 — The South African Government said today that it had released 269 of the 280 children under the age of 16 who were being detained under the 11-month-old state of emergency decree.

The Law and Order Minister, Adriaan Vlok, said in a statement that he had decided that "the blame for these detentions lies with the revolutionary radicals."

He said that the 11 children still being held were facing charges of violence, including murder, and that 58 others had appeared in court on various charges.

But Mr. Vlok did not disclose statistics for the 16- to 18-year-old age group, which accounts for the majority of juvenile detainees.

The Government said on April 24 that 19,209 people had been detained under state of emergency laws after June 12, 1986. 4,244 people were still in detention, of whom 1,424 were between the ages of 12 and 18.

Today, civil-rights groups condemned what they called "official civicism" over the detention of children, many of whom have been held without trial for nine months or more.

"The world campaign for the release of child detainees has been a tremendous success," said Audrey Coleman, spokeswoman for the Detainees Parents Support Committee, a group monitoring detention without trial.

"The pressure has been such that the Government has been seen for what it is: entirely cynical in its approach to detention without trial," she said.

But she warned against premature celebrating. "This could be a clearing of the jails before the next crackdown against activists ahead of June 12, the first anniversary of the state of emergency," she said.

The releases came after recent unconfirmed reports by the Detainees Parents Support Committee and the Black Sash, which has led the Free the Children campaign, that hundreds of children had been released nationwide.

The releases coincided with the 26th anniversary of the South African Republic on May 31 and International Children's Day on June 1.

Diplomats noted that the announcement of the release of children came two days before President P. W. Botha is to make a rare visit to the black townships of Sharpeville and Soweto and ahead of the economic summit conference in Venice next week.

Mr. Botha has reportedly written to the leaders of the seven countries taking part in the conference, including President Reagan, asking them to condemn the violence of the outlawed African National Congress, the main group fighting to end white rule.

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Out of South Africa, a voice

I N THE TIME he had in New York, Max Coleman used it to explain detention. "Because in South Africa, the word has a whole different meaning," he said. "When we say a person has been detained, we mean that person has been withdrawn from society. Without a lawyer or access to family or anything. Not even the courts have jurisdiction. That person is totally isolated and at the mercy of the state. And these are not terrorists and criminals, as they say. They are just straightforward, legitimate political opponents of the government."

Once, Coleman and his wife were detained. On another occasion, two of his four sons were held. "They held one of my sons for five months," he said. "He was editor of a student newspaper that was critical of the government. They just came and took him. And then one day, he was released. But there was no explanation, no apologies. They just let him go."

In South Africa, Max Coleman has been involved in the fight against detention since 1981. He helped found the Detainees' Parents Support Committee. When they came together, they were concerned mostly with comfort issues, "Getting food and clothing in to people," he said. "But then we began to realize that we could do more."

And they did. He explained that in South Africa any time more than two people got together in a demonstration, they're breaking the law. So for 25 weeks in a row, only one person would stand in front of police headquarters and another before the Supreme Court. And that person would hold a sign. "For 150 days my son has been detained," the sign would say.

In a society that doesn't allow protest, once it happens, it gets noticed. Coleman's group was branded as being radical. But it also got meetings with high officials. The goal was to try to change the law. That didn't happen. "But we did get them to change some practices," he said. "We could get relatives in to visit and we began to get lawyers in."

Coleman said that by last year, more than 30,000 people were being detained. He said that 25,000 of those were being held under state-of-emergency regulations. "Before, it was primarily the political activists they detained. But now, they are detaining whole communities, mostly grass-roots people. They are out to smash political organizations. And they have locked up a lot of kids. About 10,000 of those being held are under 18 and they have them right down to the age of 10."

"They take them out of schools and they barge into homes in the middle of the night. They just knock doors down and beat people right there. Then, they throw them in vans and take them away. When people come out, they tell of torture and other kinds of abuse. The shameful episode is what they are doing to children."

Max Coleman is a white South African. "But most of the people in our organization are black," he said. "We regard ourselves as being in the mainstream of the struggle."

"Is there any sign the situation is getting better?"

"Not at all. They have been releasing people (detainees), especially children but that's just because of the international pressure. They were also holding more people than they could handle. They wanted to get the number down."

"What do you look for next?"

"I believe a big crackdown is coming. June 26 is the anniversary of the Soweto uprising of 1976. And on June 26, we celebrate the Freedom Charter. That's the blueprint for a democratic South Africa that was drawn up in 1956. These are very important days for us."

MAX COLEMAN CAME to the United States to receive an award for his work with detainees. But everywhere he went, he encountered questions. The news media know what is going on inside South Africa, but the blackout that has been imposed prevents them from telling. And so we depend upon people like Coleman, who are passing through.

"The crackdown had a very important effect for the government," Coleman said. "But there has been a very dangerous development. We have a misinformed public. Whites in South Africa think everything is all right."