ACTION ALERT

URGENT SUPPORT NEEDED FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

We have received an urgent appeal from the religious community in South Africa asking us for help to stop the detention and harassment of church people, especially the staff members of the interdenominational South African Council of Churches.

These Christians are being targeted for nothing more than doing God's work by attempting to dismantle apartheid. In the enclosed telex message, Reverend Frank Chikane, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, said "It has become more and more painful to witness to Christ's message of truth and equality. As committed Christians, there is no choice but to proclaim this message."

In response, churches and other organizations inside South Africa, such as the United Democratic Front, a coalition of 700 groups, have launched their own Unlock Apartheid's Jails Campaign. They have targeted the holiday season for escalated action calling for the release of all detainees and political prisoners.

Their efforts followed our own Unlock Apartheid Jails Campaign which was launched by Bill Cosby in New York on September 28. From Honolulu to New York, hundreds of churches, synagogues, schools, and community groups participated by collecting more than 60,000 keys as a demand that South Africa unlock its apartheid jails. These keys have since been delivered to both the South African Consulate in New York and the Embassy in Washington DC.

As part of continuing the pressure for the release of detainees in South Africa we are calling on all members of the religious community to join by taking part in the following actions:

- Include South African and Namibian detainees and political prisoners in your prayers, not only during the holiday season but also throughout the year, or until such time when their freedom is won (see telex for names).

- Write letters demanding that the South African government release all detainees and political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia, particularly those in the religious community, and send them to:

  Ambassador Pieter Koornhof, South African Embassy
  3105 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008

  (Copies of these letters should be sent to the American Committee of Africa which will forward them to the South African Council of Churches.)

- Write letters urging support for comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa [Dellums/Cranston (HR 1580/S.556)].


Supporting African freedom and independence since 1953 • Established The Africa Fund, 1966
Cosby Heads 'Unlock Apartheid Jails' Drive; Hits Reporter's Insult

Bill Cosby, world's richest entertainer whose No. 1 TV show reaches 63 million Americans every Thursday night, and some big-city mayors kicked off a campaign to free political prisoners in South Africa, whose only crime is their opposition to apartheid (racial segregation).

Cosby is honorary chairman of the "Unlock Apartheid's Jails" campaign, which is initiated by The Africa Fund. While at a press conference, a reporter accused the American Committee On Africa (ACOA), an affiliate of The Africa Fund, of participating in communist-led efforts and asked Cosby: "... Are you going to continue to associate with groups like ACOA...?"

Although the communist allegation has yet to be confirmed, Cosby replied, "Yes, I will until Ronald Reagan calls me and says, 'Bill, I think I can do a better job than you.'" He was loudly applauded.

Each mayor presented his Key to the City to Cosby and Ambassador Joseph Garba of Nigeria, chairman of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, to dramatize his demand to free the political prisoners.

One of the mayors, Edward Koch of New York City, said, "I perceive the South African regime as the direct heir and descendant of Hitler's Nazi Germany." He added: "In South Africa they are seeking to destroy the Black citizens and the rest of the world has been far too quiet for too long."

Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, showing support for jailed South African leader Nelson Mandela and his wife Winnie, said he is leading the effort to rename the two blocks where the South African Embassy is located in the nation's capital from Massachusetts Avenue to Nelson and Winnie Mandela Plaza. "It's outrageous and senseless for thousands of decent citizens of the world to be jailed without trials for their attempt to remove a shackles of injustice and humanity," he added.

Bill Cosby launches campaign with aid of (l-r) Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and New York City Mayor Edward Koch.
Protesters Of South African Policy Are Arrested

Fifteen persons protesting the imprisonment of children in South Africa were arrested yesterday after demonstrating outside the South African Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue NW, according to D.C. police.

The nine men and six women were charged with demonstrating within 500 feet of an embassy, a misdemeanor, and later were released.

About 80 people staged a noon-hour demonstration near the embassy as part of a nationwide campaign to publicize the plight of hundreds of children who have been detained and tortured by South African authorities. Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.) and other members of Congress held a news conference earlier in the day to demand the release of the children.
STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR UNLOCK APARTHEID'S JAILS CAMPAIGN AND SANCTIONS
BY REVEREND ALLAN BOESAK, LEADER OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES AND PATRON OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

What you are doing with the Unlock Apartheid's Jails Campaign is being watched by people at home and has inspired them to launch their own campaign to unlock apartheid's jails. I have even brought a key to the United States, a key that was made by someone who had been in prison, as a symbol of the importance that we—Archbishop Tutu, the United Democratic Front and other organizations—attach to your efforts.

What this campaign does is to keep the issue of detentions alive in the face of the grim determination of the government to keep everything under wraps. The campaign does make a difference for the lives of individual detainees. Beyond that it has strengthened our determination to press for the release of all detainees, despite the fact that such campaigns are illegal in South Africa.

I should also say that never before have black people in South Africa been so willing to be so openly aligned with people in America. Till now there has been a wariness among black people to do so because of the policies of the Reagan Administration—because of your government's constructive engagement with apartheid.

It is very clear that the sanctions that were passed—because of the resistance of the Reagan Administration—were not the sanctions that we wanted or needed.

All of the major organizations in South Africa—the South African Council of Churches, the United Democratic Front, COSATU as well as Archbishop Tutu and myself—have reaffirmed our stand for stronger sanctions. In particular, we are pinning our hopes on the Dellums/Cranston bill for comprehensive sanctions, hoping that it will be passed and bring about stronger pressure.

The Star Johannesburg Tuesday November 17 1987

Key campaign by UDF

CAMPAIGN to unlock doors of apartheid jails was launched last week by the United Democratic Front and its affiliates. Symbolic keys were collected at a rally in Cape Town to mark the release of Govan Mbeki. UDF's Allan Boesak, gave notice that the keys would be deposited in front of President Botha's house.
ECUTEXT: 'Appeal on "People's Christmas" in South Africa'

The staff of the Programme to Combat Racism [of the World Council of Churches] has received the following appeal from the general secretary of the South Africa Council of Churches (SACC), Frank Chikane:

"The people of South Africa are planning a "People's Christmas against the state of emergency" campaign to unlock apartheid jails - in particular, against the harassment, detention and torture of children. The UDF has picked the period between the 10-25 December for this campaign, that is, starting from the international human rights day to Christmas day.

"I hereby wish to appeal to you to request our church partners and solidarity groups internationally to be in solidarity with us by organizing and participating in programmes geared to highlighting our plight in South Africa and to bring pressure to bear on the apartheid regime to abandon apartheid, to enable all South Africans to build a new and just society."

This is not an appeal that we can take lightly. It comes in the wake of the international conference on Children, Repression and the Law in Apartheid South Africa (24-27 September, Harare [EPS 87.10.06]). There, the evidence presented by groups such as the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA) and the Detainees Parents Support Committee (DPSC), together with the testimonies of a number of children who had been detained and tortured, proved beyond doubt that children in South Africa suffer under inhumane brutality in jail and at the hands of the police and defence force.

The South Africans who testified at that conference knew very well that upon return to South Africa, they faced the very real possibility of detention - in some cases, of re-detention; the South African regime paid very close attention to the conference. The day before it began, a press release was issued by Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlock discounting the "wild claims of mass detentions of children, and their so-called torture and abuse". During the course of the conference, Dr Beyers Naudé, former general secretary of the South Africa Council of Churches, received a telex from Vlock warning that deliberations "would not go unnoticed".
ATT: SAPA, CHURCH LEADERS AND OVERSEAS PARTNERS.

DETENTION OF SACC STAFF

THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONSTANT HARASSMENT AND DETENTION OF SACC STAFF. DURING THE LAST SEVEN DAYS TWO STAFF MEMBER RELATED TO THE SACC HAVE BEEN REPORTED DETAINED. THESE ARE:

2. MIKE NCUBE - D.C. FIELDWORKER IN PRETORIA DETAINED BY SECURITY POLICE EARLY HOURS OF FRIDAY NOVEMBER 27, 1987. IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN WHERE HE IS BEING HELD AND UNDER WHICH ACT HE IS HELD.

OTHER SACC WORKERS ARE STILL IN DETENTION AT PRESENT:
NORMAN NGWEDZENI - WITS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES J-R WORKER DETAINED IN OCTOBER 1987 IS STILL HELD UNDER THE EMERGENCY - REGULATIONS.

NTOMBAZANA BOTHA - BORDER COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY HAS BEEN HELD UNDER THE EMERGENCY SINCE MARCH 18TH 1987. STILL DETAINED.

ALFRED METELE - BORDER COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FIELDWORKER - HAS BEEN HELD UNDER THE EMERGENCY SINCE MARCH 18TH, 1987 AS WELL - STILL DETAINED.

MBULELO GONIWE - MIDLANDS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES - HAS BEEN HELD UNDER EMERGENCY REGULATIONS SINCE 12/06/86 - STILL DETAINED.

WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONSTANT HARASSMENT AND DETENTION OF STAFF OF THE COUNCIL WHICH DEALS WITH THE SANCTUARY PROGRAMME. EDDIE MAKUE IN PARTICULAR HAS BEEN DETAINED OR TAKEN FOR QUESTIONING A NUMBER OF TIMES IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS AND HIS LIFE AND THE WELFARE OF HIS FAMILY HAVE BEEN THREATENED.

ON OCTOBER 10TH 1987 EDDIE MAKUE AND IKE ABRAHAMS WERE QUESTIONED AT JOHN VOSTER SQUARE AND ASKED TO MAKE STATEMENTS ON 'INTERNAL REFUGEES', THAT IS, DISPLACED PEOPLE BECAUSE OF HARASSMENT IN THEIR AREA. MOST OF THESE ARE CHILDREN. OUR STAFF ASSIST THESE VICTIMS WITHIN THE SANCTUARY PROGRAMME. AFTER REFUSING TO MAKE STATEMENTS WITHOUT CONSULTING LAWYERS, THEY WERE THREATENED WITH DETENTION THEN RELEASED ON CONDITION THEY SUBMIT THE SAID STATEMENT BY OCTOBER 12, 1987.

THE COUNCIL'S FEELING WAS THAT IT IS NOT OBLIGED TO GIVE INFORMATION ON VICTIMS OF APARTHEID. WE ARE MINISTERING TO THE VERY SYSTEM TO BRUTALIZE THE FURTHER AND BY DOING RISK THEIR LIVES. SINCE THEN THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER ACTION FROM THE POLICE.

DURING THE PRESENT STATE OF EMERGENCY, 32 MEMBERS OF STAFF OF THE SACC (INCLUDING REGIONAL COUNCILS) HAVE BEEN DETAINED. IT SEEMS THAT THE CHURCHES WORK TOWARDS JUSTICE AND PEACE IN OUR COUNTRY IS PERCEIVED AS A THREAT TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. IN THE PRESENT CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA, IT HAS BECOME MORE AND MORE PAINFUL TO WITNESS TO CHRIST'S MESSAGE OF TRUTH AND EQUALITY. AS COMMITTED CHRISTIANS, THERE IS NO CHOICE BUT TO PROCLAIM THIS MESSAGE. WE EXHORT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INHUMANE POLICY OF DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL, AND CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF OUR WORKERS AND AN END TO THEIR HARASSMENT.

ISSUED BY REVD FRANK CHIKANE
GENERAL SECRETARY (SACC)
2/12/87