



H.R.C. BULLETIN

APRIL 1975

The Human Rights Committee was formed in September last year by a group of people who want freedom from oppression in South Africa. The Committee stands for an internationally recognised set of values which do not, generally, exist in South Africa - principles which are embodied in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, from which we draw our name.

Our aim is to protest the lack of freedoms in the society; to protest the violation of human rights by the Government which is not even prepared to sign the UN Declaration; to promote consciousness among the people of S.A. and overseas of the injustices of the present regime; and to join the increasingly popular movement to bring about full rights for all the people of this country.

- * We stand for majority rule and the radical changes this will involve in all sections of South African society.
- * We stand for a society free of discrimination on any grounds - colour, class, belief or sex.
- * We stand for the unconditional release of political prisoners.
- * We stand for the abolition of detention without trial, the freeing of detainees, the lifting of house-arrest and all other restrictions.
- * We believe that South Africa's exiles, if permitted to return, could make a full contribution to the construction of a free society.

The Human Rights Committee has held two successful meetings, one to commemorate Human Rights Day, the other to call for the release of detainees and political prisoners. Two other meetings, to call for the release of Bram Fischer, were banned by Johannesburg's Chief Magistrate.

The two meetings held were well attended and there are strong indications of support for the Committee from the people. There are also indications that the "Free Fischer" meetings would have been well attended.

This support from the people is most encouraging. Indeed, it is vital if our role is to have real meaning in the struggle. We are all oppressed in South Africa, and we must all struggle together for freedom and equality.

Caroline Wellman
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* This is the first newsletter of the Human Rights *
* Committee and brings you news of our activities. *
* Please pass it on to your friends because it is *
* vital that it reaches the greatest number of *
* people possible. *
* We hope to bring out a Bulletin at regular *
* intervals. We will also bring out "special *
* editions" when the need arises. *
* We would welcome letters and comment. *
* Write to Secretary, Sheila Wembaig, *
* P.O. Box 79051, Senderwood, 2145. *
* Write out FOR FURTHER COPIES AND TELL YOUR *
* FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME! *
* * * * *

detainees

Since September last year - six months ago - an undisclosed number of people have been detained under Section Six of the Terrorism Act in connection with the Sharpeville Rally at Curdie's Fountain in Durban.

Even now there are people missing. Their worried families are unsure whether they have been detained or have fled the country. The Security Police have refused repeated requests by families and the Press to disclose the names and the number of people whom they are holding incommunicado in South Africa's jails.

The detainees are members or supporters of the Black organisations SASO, BPC, BAWU or TRICON. Some are sole supporters of their families who are now destitute and have no way of knowing when or if their loved ones are to be released.

These are the few facts that are known:

- * Thirteen people are being charged under the Terrorism Act.
- * Nineteen people have been released and are being charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act.
- * About 30 people (as far as can be ascertained) are still being detained.
- * Between 50 and 60 people have fled the country.

The names of the 13 being charged:

Saths Cooper, Muntu Myeza, Mosiou Lekota, Strini Moodley, Dr Aubrey Mokoape, Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, Nkwenkwe Nkomo, Kaunda Sedibe, Zithulele Cindi, Rubin Hare, Sadek Variawa, Suleiman Ahmed Ismail, Lingam Moodley.

The names of the 17 charged are:

L. Moahluli, M. Fabre, P. Padaychee, P. Gumede, M. Khanyile, R. Msibe, K. Msomi, R. Matabela, N. Pele, C. Johnson, M. John, A. Rambally, K.S. Govender, S. Mall, Mr Dlamini, Ms Zelman, P. Bolton.

Torture allegations against the Security Police have been made in court. A Durban Attorney, Mr S. Chetty, brought an application before the Supreme Court in Pretoria for the Security Police to be restrained from further questioning the detainees on the grounds of torture allegations made to him. The court rejected the application.

The Terrorism Act allows the Police draconian powers over the lives of men. Police need not reveal, even to families, whom they have picked up, why, where, what for, where they are being held, their state of health, their needs, their requests for clothing or other items, possible charges against them, and whether or not they are being held in solitary confinement. Lawyers have no access. The only stipulation is that a doctor must visit them periodically. No outside doctors are allowed. Not even the Attorney-General is neces-

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... committee needs financial sup-
port from the public, and their friends who
...
... raised some money but the
... publishing costs,
... there is an amount of
... distributed during the
... "free fisher" meetings.
... will be welcomed by
...
... HRC Secretary,
... Box 79051,
...

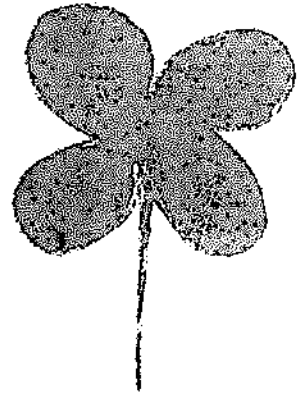
On December 19th, the Human Rights Committee held a meeting to protest the continued detention of about 40 people held under the Terrorism Act. The following poem was read by its author, L. Mabaso, a student at the University of the North.

THE VICTIM : PART I

Ko-ko-ko - Maak oop - Open!
Who is there? The sulky fat woman asks,
The husband busy trying to arm himself
for the possible assailants.
Maak oop - Polisie! Polisie! They
sneak flashing torch lights in
windows, doors and ventilators.
The woman looks at the husband
for a word of approval to open the door,
the husband drops the weapons and runs
for his dear "mean all" book.
The door is opened. Without saying
any word they make themselves comfortable
in every room and everything.
Drawers, wardrobes, tin trunks and
suitcases and "cases" are ransacked.
A young student is hauled by
the neck from under the bed.
"What have I done?" say his eyes
"What has he done?" say the parents.
Kom, Kom! Jy sal maar voor da die vraag vra!
Ous het nie tyd.
Hy is maar 'n terrorist.
Without any explanation to the parents
he is taken
He is young, brave and deeply convicted
But will he come back like this?
Maybe he will be in court
within 90 days or 180 days
Or never at all. Who will dare ask.
They are the Authority

THE VICTIM : PART II

Alone he sits like a Bird of Prey
caged in cement and concrete slabs,
Deprived of all joys, friends and kinsmen
The small cell is dirty, lit by a
thin ray of light which penetrates
the darkness of the cell.
Alone he sits with his head
between his knees and his hands
behind his thighs.
A faint groan and moaning escapes
through his dry cracked
lips because of the pains
he feels in the ribs - where
the bars boot has landed during interrogation.
The continual battering of the
baton has caused him the splitting headache.
He asks himself the question
What Have I done but at that
moment he hears the heavy
turning of the keys
And he knows that "This is it"
The policemen and the jail warden come in.
Vandag jy gaan die waarheid praat,
Jy dink want jy is geleerd
Jy is beter neh! Well we
shall see! They kick him
left, right, up and down and
centre. They leave him
lying prostrate and groaning
For how long this will continue
Nobody knows. Maybe until he
"hangs himself" or "he is insane."



HRC MAKES ITS MARK

The Human Rights Committee has already succeeded in making its mark!

The following is an extract from a letter sent out by HRC Secretary, Sheila Weinberg:

The meeting in Johannesburg at the Gandhi Hall was attended by about 500 people. Addresses were delivered by Helen Joseph, Lilian Ngoyi, Dr R.A.M. Saloojee and M.J. Naidoo, who came specially from Durban for the occasion.

The South African Government was criticised for its non-adherence to and violation of the Declaration of Human Rights in all its articles.

The meeting in Durban was held at the Naaz Cinema and was attended by an estimated 700 people. The gathering was movingly addressed by the Archbishop of Durban, the Very Rev. Denis Hurley, Mrs Fatima Meer, Professor Barend van Niekerk The Rev. Ernest Baartman and Mrs Harriet Bolton.

The following common resolution was passed by both meetings:

This meeting noting 1. that the Declaration of Human Rights is flagrantly violated daily in South Africa
2. that South Africa is not a signatory to the Declaration, demands

1. the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners, the lifting of the bans on the peoples organisations and on individuals, and the repeal of all repressive legislation.

A further resolution was passed at each venue demanding the unconditional release of more than 40 people presently being held under Section Six of the Terrorism Act.

Arising out of the December 8 meeting in Johannesburg, the Human Rights Committee called a lunch-hour meeting on December 19th to highlight the plight of the 40 people detained. The meeting was held in collaboration with the Student' Legal Aid Fund, a University of the North Group set up to collect money to aid the families of the detainees and to provide legal representation when this is allowed. An estimated 200 people vociferously called for the unconditional release of the detainees.

On December 29 we held a party for the children in the Witwatersrand complex whose parents (and grandparents) have been banned, detained or jailed. The party was attended by 100 children, and a grand time was had by all. We hope this will turn into an annual event, demonstrating our concern for those people and their families who are suffering for their stand against apartheid.

The Human Rights Committee has made its mark in South Africa. We plan to go on as we have started, producing publications for distribution at home and overseas; holding meetings on issues of importance as they arise; and protesting the state of affairs as it exists today.



Sheila Weinberg
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The following list of names and dates of death is based on information received from the Security Headquarter and the various courts, including the Supreme Court, and other sources. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the date of death.

WILHELMUS DE BEEMANN: Died 5th September 1963. Inquest verdict: suicide, with no blame attached to anyone. No finding on allegations of assault.

WILLINGTON MAHRE: Died about 1st September 1963 - 140 days after his detention: causes of death unknown.

WILLIAM KHALIL FALSAH: Died 5th September 1964 after falling from 5th floor from a window in Police Headquarters.

WALTER TYPHO: Detained 19th October 1964. Allegedly found hanged by his wrists: cause unknown.

WELLES BISHOP: 5th May 1965. Inquest verdict: "natural causes".

WONDERFUL BISHOP: Detained 19th October 1965. Died the following day of "natural causes".

JAMES HAMAKWAYO: Detained 26th August 1966. Date of death unknown. Alleged suicide by hanging.

WANGULA SHANYONG: Died 5th October 1966, six weeks after his detention: suicide.

LEONG YUM DIN: Died 19th November 1966 three days after his detention: suicide.

AH YAN: Died 5th January 1967 approximately two months after his detention: suicide.

ALPHEUS MADIRA: Died 5th September 1967. Allegedly hanged himself.

J. P. TUBAKWE: Died 11th September 1968, the day after his detention. Found hanged.

NICODIMUS KODATHI: Died 2nd February 1970, after having been in custody for fifteen months. Inquest verdict: natural causes.

SOLOMON MODIPANE: Died 25th February 1970. No inquest held. Alleged natural causes.

JAMES LENKOE: Died 10th March 1970, five days after his detention. Evidence led of traces of copper in the wound on his toe. Inquest verdict: suicide.

IMAM ABDULLAH HAROUN: Died 27th September 1970. Inquest: died of injuries sustained when falling down a flight of stairs.

MTHAYENI CUTHSELA: Detained 21st December 1970. Died about one month later: "Natural causes".

CALEB MAYEKISO: Detained immediately on release from Robben Island. Died 13th May 1971, eighteen days later. natural causes.

MICHAEL SHIVUTE: Died 16th June 1971 on the night of his detention. Alleged suicide.

JACOB MORHAKOOLA: Died the night before his trial began.

AHMED TIMOL: Fell from ninth floor of Security Headquarters. 28th October 1971.

UNKNOWN MAN: An unknown man died on an unknown date of unknown cause. His death was revealed without detail in the South African Parliament.

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the rhodesian irony

The HRC has demanded the release of the country's hundreds of political prisoners, and attacked their continued incarceration as unjustifiable.

But that is in terms of the HRC view of things. Now the HRC says this continued incarceration is unjustifiable even in Vorster's view of things.

Vorster has been sitting back and welcoming recognition of the role he played in forcing Ian Smith to the conference table - even though it seems Smith is intent on fouling things up the minute it seems progress is being made.

But the point for South Africa is this: Vorster knew Smith would have to release the Rhodesian detainees (or at least agree to do this) before anyone would talk to him. Vorster leaned on him hard, and Smith gave the undertaking.

What is the difference between Rhodesia setting free its political prisoners, and South Africa keeping hers in jail? This difference: That Vorster is saying to Smith "You do it" and to himself, "But I won't do it."

Vorster has weakened his uncompromising stand on this issue precisely because he forced Smith into this step. Vorster tells the world that committed opponents of the South African regime are criminals. If that were true, how could Smith be encouraged to release the 'criminals' he was holding, as a political bargaining point? This could not be so, if Vorster saw them simply as criminals.

The final fact, when all this is added up, is that Vorster has accepted as a principle that political prisoners would have to be released and negotiated with before any real solution to Rhodesia can be worked out.

But he won't do that. In his own mind he knows he does not accept the principle, but because he is still playing the suicidal petty political game he has forced Smith to abandon it.

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FREE FISCHER!

Despite our concern for releasing Bram Fischer, the Human Rights Committee arranged a public meeting on Sunday, 21st January, to be held indoors for a maximum of no more than a few hundred people.

Over a number of days a number of people were invited to address the gathering, including Dr. Pieter van der Merwe, the head of the Christian Institute, and Dr. (Mrs. F. S. van der Merwe) Ngakane of the Council of Churches. They are people of the highest calibre, and represent a large cross-section of the Afrikaner society. At the time the meeting was held at the Gandhi Hall, Fox Street, Johannesburg, we distributed 5,000 leaflets.

BANNED

On Saturday night, by means of radio news broadcasts the Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg banned our meeting anywhere within the borders of the Johannesburg Magisterial district, between the hours of 8,00 a.m. on Sunday and 8,00 a.m. on Tuesday morning. The Human Rights Committee, all along the line acting purely within the limits of the law, was forced to cancel the meeting. We notified the press, and posted a notice on the closed door of the Gandhi Hall. Despite this, about 150 people turned up.

We took the decision to postpone the meeting till after the ban expired on Tuesday morning. Leaflets were printed, and the press notified that the meeting would take place at lunch-time on Tuesday. On Monday night, employing once again the wide powers vested in him, the Chief Magistrate banned the meeting. After legal consultation, we realised the futility of carrying on in this way. The Magistrate could continuously ban the meeting for periods of 48 hours, and the sequence of off-on-off-on would become confusing to the public.

We therefore extend regret to our supporters.



PROFILE

Bram Fischer has spent the past nine years in prison.

In the early thirties, when this was legal, he joined the Communist Party. He was a member of the Central Committee in 1966 when he was sentenced to life imprisonment under the Sabotage Act. While in jail, he was awarded the Lenin Prize.

A lawyer of international standing, for more than 30 years Bram helped fight political cases (Rivonia; Treason Trial) in the courts of South Africa. Bram is a gentle, kind man, with unlimited concern for individual human beings, regardless of race or social standing. His patience, integrity and great personal charm earned him the respect and affection of all who know him.

He is the son of a former Judge President of the Free State, a grandson of a former Prime Minister. With his background and intellect, he could have achieved the highest office in the land. Instead, he sacrificed wealth and privilege for his ideals.

OVER

Now Bram's long struggle is almost over. Cancer has been found in his spine, brain, hip and ribs. His condition is fast deteriorating.

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THE BLANKET OF SILENCE

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Pre-dawn raids by the Security Police have claimed the liberty of at least 11 people from Soweto and its neighbouring Coloured townships over the past few months. Anxious families don't know where their loved ones are being held, or the charges likely to be brought against them. There are the raids --- and a blanket of silence.

The Rand Daily Mail reported that at the beginning of April, when asked about the detainees from the Reef, Minister of Justice, Mr Kruger said: "I do not know who these people are, and if they are under arrest and are to appear in court, the matter is sub judice and I cannot comment."

Those said to be detained, either under the Terrorism Act or the General Laws Amendment Act, include: Mr W. Hamilton, Mr C. Goddard, J. Bamrock, S. Maguwa, R. Burgers, M. Pheto, E. Molobi, T. Bloem, X. Nuse, M. Radebe, H. Mbau.

These laws add a new dimension to the horrors of detention without trial - both for those held and their families. Relatives go through the torture of trying to find missing people, while those in detention realise that their plight is anonymous.

OBITUARY

Alfred Konza died recently on Robben Island, two years from his date of release. He was sentenced in 1963 to two years for leaving the country illegally and 20 years for undergoing military training. The sentence was reduced by 8 years on appeal. He was 45 years old, and he died of cardiac failure, far from those who were dear to him.

For many years Alfred served his sentence without receiving visits or letters from his family, simply because they did not know where he was. Only after years of worry for him and his family were they able to trace him to Robben Island.

Now he is dead, and his body has been transported home to Port Elizabeth where he was buried on Friday 14th March.

We express our deep condolences to the family of this son of Africa.

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