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# What Is The End Conscription Campaign?

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# WHAT IS the End Conscription Campaign ?





# The END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN was formed in late 1983. Why?

Between 1979 and 1983 there was a steady stream of conscientious objectors who went to prison rather than into the SADF or into exile. Some of them were pacifists, some of them objected in particular to fighting an unjust war upholding apartheid. Consciences were stirred, opposition to serving in the SADF swelled. Calls were made for the law to be changed to recognise all genuine conscientious objectors.

Then in 1983, the government introduced the Defence Further Amendment Act, which recognises the principle of conscientious objection and alternative service, but for religious pacifists only. All other objectors are liable to a prison sentence of up to 6 years.

In the view of the CO movement at the time, this law was inadequate and unjustly punitive. Something more needed to be done than just calling for the proper recognition of COs. People began to see that it was not so much the narrowness of CO recognition which was the problem, but conscription itself.

This sentiment was crystalised in a motion passed by the Black Sash at their annual conference in March 1983. The motion demanded "that the South African government abolish all conscription for military service".

The motion was endorsed by the the CO Support Groups' conference in July.

By the end of 1983, all the different strands of anti-conscription activities began to coalesce around the

simple demand: "END CONSCRIPTION". End Conscription Campaign committees were formed in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Thus, the End Conscription Campaign emerged as a response to the crisis of conscience caused by conscription, the role of the SADF, and inadequate recognition of conscientious objection.

## WHAT IS ECC?

ECC is based on the fundamental belief that individuals should have the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in the SADF.

The main thrust of the Campaign is directed at government, in order to bring about a change in the law so that military service is no longer compulsory.

ECC is not an organisation as such but an umbrella body comprising a number of different organisations. It is not affiliated to any other organisation and is not aligned with any political grouping.

The organisations represented on the ECCs in the 9 regions include church, women's, student, political and human rights organisations e.g. Black Sash, the Catholic Justice and Reconciliation Commission, and NUSAS. Although these organisations have varying policies on a wide range of issues, they are united in their opposition to conscription.

From a work point of view, each region has a regional general meeting every week or second week at which all major practical and policy decisions are made. The bulk of campaign work is carried out by various subcommittees, namely; churches, schools, culture and media.

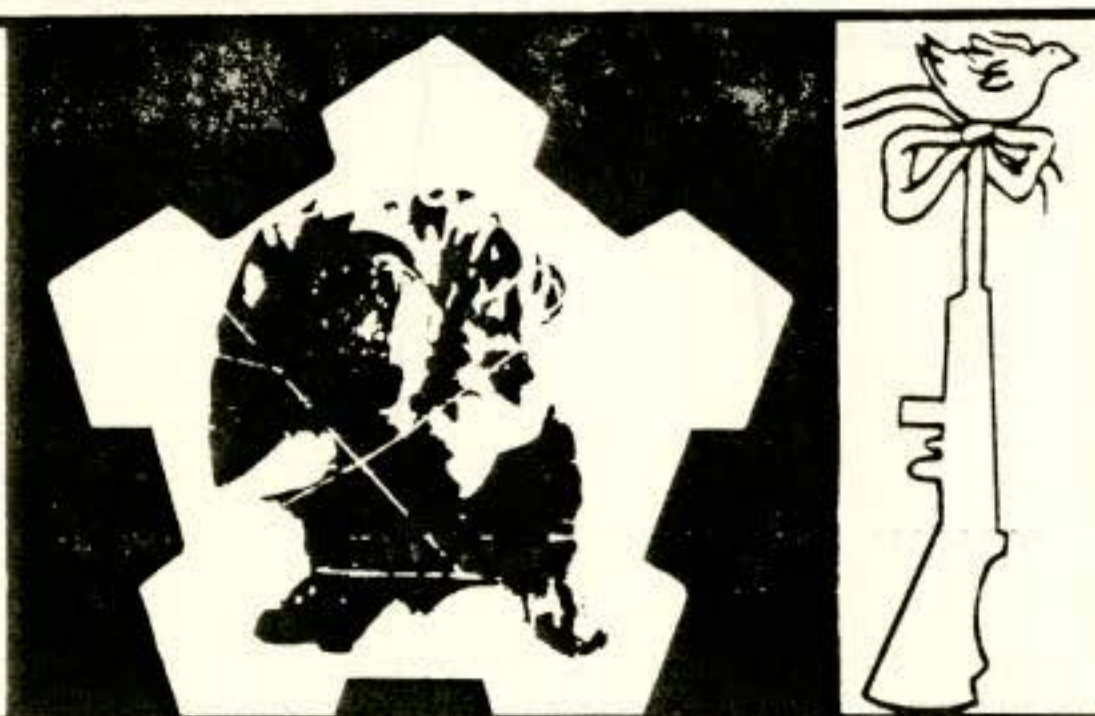
## CONSCRIPTION

In South Africa it is compulsory for every white male citizen to serve two years initially in the SADF, then off and on until he is 60 years old.

Service in the SADF is not just military training and mock battles. There is a war on inside South Africa and on its borders, and conscripts have to fight it.

Conscription means being forced to fight in this war, even if it is against your principles.

There is limited recognition for religious pacifists, but for other conscientious objectors the options are up to six years in prison, or exile.



July 1985: ECC National Peace Festival

### Previous ECC campaigns:

March 1984: No War in Namibia.

October 1984: Launch of the ECC's "Declaration to End Conscription".

July 1985: ECC National Peace Festival

October 1985: Troops out of the Townships, including the Fast for a Just Peace.

April 1986: Working for a Just Peace.

August 1986: ECC's Right to Speak.

October 1986: Tie a Yellow Ribbon Campaign — Troops Out of the Townships.

April 1987: War is Not Compulsory — Lets Choose a Just Peace.



# ECC TODAY

ECC has 9 branches throughout South Africa — Durban, Pietermaritzburg, East London, Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Although under a lot of pressure due to the Emergency regulations and the actions of the security police, ECC is thriving.

This is not so much because of the organisation, ECC, but because of the issue, conscription.

Conscription directly affects millions of South Africans. As an organisation, ECC seeks to articulate and represent the views of those conscripts and their families and friends who are uncomfortable with conscription in the current South African context.

Even if ECC did not exist, the crisis of conscience would remain, and the desire for the end of conscription would remain.



Until such time as conscription is ended, ECC calls for certain interim measures to be adopted:

1. The definition of conscientious objection to be broadened to include selective and universal, secular and religious conscientious objectors;
2. Alternative service to be available in non-state as well as state bodies;
3. The period of alternative service to be reduced to the length of military service;
4. Troops be allowed to choose whether to serve in the townships or not, or in Namibia or not.



# IF ECC IS *AGAINST* CONSCRIPTION, WHAT IS IT *FOR*?

ECC is for a just peace in South Africa. We are committed to staying in South Africa and working toward a resolution to the conflict. We encourage political solutions to be applied to the political problems of our country.

ECC encourages its members to become involved in positive service to the broader community through welfare, peace and development work.

This commitment to working for a just peace is best illustrated by the fact that last year ECC built a whole campaign around the theme. "Working for a Just Peace". This campaign involved numerous constructive projects such as building creches and peace parks, holding picnics for children, environmental clean-ups etc.

It is through these projects and campaigns that the ECC is contributing towards the type of society where peace and justice will be a reality, and where war and inequality will be past history

