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Township Residents!

End Conscription Campaign Churches' Subgroup

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TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS!

We are fasting and praying
for you
from Monday the 3rd of August
to
Wednesday the 26th of August



APARTHEID OUT — SADF OUT

CHURCHES

End Conscription Campaign Churches Group

Why prayer and fasting ?

Prayer and fasting stands in a rich Biblical and religious tradition. It has been shown to be a powerful spiritual and non-violent weapon. Down the ages people have used it to pursue personal holiness and truth, to strengthen their commitment to justice and to appeal to God to bring about social change. It has been used both privately and publicly. It recognises no artificial boundaries between 'spiritual' and 'political'. It is concerned with all of life.

Why prayer and fasting for the SADF to leave the Townships ?

Because ...

- all leaders and organisations with credibility in the townships, representing most township residents, have called for the SADF to be withdrawn.
- the presence of the SADF is provocative and has time and again been the cause of violent confrontation.
- the withdrawal of the SADF is seen by political and Christian leadership in the townships as being one of the essential steps among others which the government must take if the root causes of the conflict are to be dealt with.
- the SADF is one of the government's main instruments of enforcing the repressive State of Emergency and curtailing resident's liberty.



Testimony of township children

"We are always running away from the SADF troops. We are guarded by troops every day as if we are criminals who are life sentenced. We can no longer walk as free men in our own land." 15 year old Bathandwa.

"In Soweto ... they say they want freedom ... they don't want the SADF in the townships." 13 year old Mokgethi (both quoted from *Two Dogs and Freedom*)

FACTS 'n FIGURES

- According to the Chief of the SADF between 6000 and 8000 soldiers are currently occupying black townships. (*Weekly Mail*, 26/6/87)
- General Magnus Malan refused to reveal how much the SADF occupation of townships was costing the taxpayer, as it was not in the public interest to know. (Radio news reports, 1/7/87)

What the churches say

"It is sad that women in this country, both black and white, are sacrificing our children: black children in the vanguard of the struggle and white children in the military." Virginia Gcabashe, Senior Vice-President, SACC.

"Conference declares that Methodists entering the townships under orders of the SADF are acting contrary to the resolutions of Conference." Methodist Church of South Africa, 1986 National Conference.

The Provincial Standing Committee of the CPSA "deplores the continued refusal of the SA government to deal properly and constructively with the crisis in black education and calls it to withdraw its troops from the schools and townships". (1986 statement)

"Conference views with alarm the increasing encroachment of the SADF into the lives of young people through so-called youth camps in black schools ... Conference therefore calls upon the government as a matter of great urgency to withdraw the SADF from the townships." Methodist Church of South Africa, 1986 National Conference.

Testimony of a conscript who served in the townships

Giving evidence at the trial of conscientious objector Philip Wilkinson in May 1987, conscript Steven Louw stated that he saw SADF members

- shooting stones from homemade catapults at township residents to provoke 'action'.
- blackmailing shebeen owners into providing liquor under threat of arrest.
- placing a ten year old child in a small 'bin' behind a Buffel. "I have never seen a little boy so frightened" he said.
- breaking up fences for firewood.
- driving at a congregation as they left a Sunday church service and then teargassing them.

He said that the officers were "scared of the media" who they accused of "trying to put the SADF and police in a bad light". He said he "could not understand this ... If our actions were legitimate, why were they trying to silence them?"

His major told him to drive up a street. The soldiers in the vehicle disembarked and hid. He was then ordered to drive "up and down ... hoping to provoke stone-throwing or retaliatory action. I remember thinking that this was not the way to keep peace ..."

ECC CHURCHES

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- TO THE GOVERNMENT we say, show your sincerity in wanting a just peace by responding to the wishes of the majority of township residents and withdrawing the SADF from the townships.
- TO TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS we say, we share your concern and fears and commit ourselves to continuing to pray, fast and work until the SADF is withdrawn from your townships and until your full and inalienable rights as South African citizens have been achieved.

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