

October 2017

Conscripts!

End Conscription Campaign Churches' Subgroup

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Recommended Citation

End Conscription Campaign Churches' Subgroup, "Conscripts!" (2017). *End Conscription Campaign*. 14.
<http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/ecc/14>

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CONSCRIPTS!

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



APARTHEID OUT — SADF OUT



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.



"What do we do with a 64-year-old immigrant who wants to volunteer and has considerable experience with Spitfires?"

IDOL?

With the issuing of the Emergency Regulations the Government has declared it illegal for anyone to make a statement "by which the system of compulsory military service is discredited or undermined." This the End Conscription Campaign does not intend to do. But we believe all thinking people should ask: WHY?

Has the state not taken on the identity of an idol, having now instructed its subjects to bow down in silence before conscription? Christians need to ask to what extent is this demand usurping and denying the Lordship of Christ in our lives?

What the churches say

- What the churches have said about the ending of conscription may not be published in terms of the Emergency Regulations.
- However, the churches have pledged their pastoral support for conscripts. They recognise the moral and spiritual dilemma you are placed in, in having to defend the morally indefensible system which all major denominations, including the NGK, have judged to be unjustifiable on Biblical grounds.
- They have furthermore recognised the right to conscientious objection and have called for conscripts to have the right

☐ not to serve in the townships or in illegally occupied Namibia.

☐ to perform a non-military form of National Service.

"We are a country at war. Apart from the official propaganda, few would really deny that the conflict is basically a civil one. It is surely common cause that this civil conflict will continue as long as the structures of society remain so unjust and exploitative.

"Where is our Christian courage? Which master do we serve? We need to take a stand against this war. How can we be silent or stand with bogus neutrality while our sons, and now the 'Dad's army' as well, are conscripted into an army which is keeping at bay the majority of this country's citizens, who are demanding their place in their land, a future for their children which we want for ours.

"Our church has been deeply disturbed by this (civil war) for some years now, now it is the time we acted more decisively." CPSA Bishop David Russel (Seek, July 1987).

Why prayer and fasting for an end to conscription ?

- We believe that because the SADF is the central pillar supporting Apartheid, most conscripts want the right to choose whether or not to serve in it.
- Prayer and fasting is an effective means through which that choice can become a reality.
- While we may not at present CALL for an end to conscription, the law does not forbid us to PRAY and FAST for it.
- Young men are forced to defend with arms a system which their churches, pastors and ministers have declared theologically indefensible. The result is that many experience a crisis of conscience. One way of standing by them and giving them pastoral support is by praying and fasting for an end to conscription.

Testimonies of conscripts

"I had a friend who was a very strong Christian. One day he had to lead an ambush against insurgents. He had to shoot the first bullet and he killed a man. When he went to clean up, that is to see if there was any useful information on the body, he saw a thick book in the man's top pocket.

"He thought it was a code book, but when he took it out, he saw it was a Bible. Today my friend is in a mental hospital, because he cannot accept the fact that he killed a fellow Christian." (The Namibian, 23/7/87)

"We were small kids in the middle of the jungle. We woke up at every sound and didn't know what we were fighting for and supposed to do. Seven years later I'm still thrown into the most horrible depression at the slightest reminder of Angola." (Sunday Times, 4/9/83).



- **TO THE GOVERNMENT** we say, lift the ban on discussing conscription freely and openly. People are adult and mature enough to weigh up the merits of different arguments and come to their own reasonable conclusions.

As long as you enforce conscription, allow conscripts the choice of serving in the townships and Namibia, and the option to do a non-military form of National Service.

- **TO CONSCRIPTS** we say, we share your anguish and dilemma as some of you go into the SADF, as some of you find a way out, as some of you choose the lonely path of exile and as some of you conscientiously object to military service. We also share the hardship and heartache of your families and loved ones.

We commit ourselves to continuing to pray and fast and to work for your right to choose.

For more information
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