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# Fast for a Just Peace

End Conscription Campaign

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# FAST FOR A JUST PEACE

*End Conscription Campaign*





# 3 Week Fast For A Just Peace

The central thrust of the ECC's "Troops out of the Townships" campaign, will be a 3 week fast for a just peace. Spear-heading this fast will be Dr Ivan Toms in Cape Town, and Harold Winkler in Johannesburg. They will fast from the 17th of September, International Day of Peace, until the 7th October, the day SADF troops first entered the townships last year. Richard Steele will fast in Durban for 2 weeks from the 22nd September. He is at present in detention. If not released before the 22nd, he will fast in jail.

At the same time as these fasts are taking place, solidarity relay fasts will take place in St Mary's Catholic Cathedral in Cape Town, St Augustine's Catholic Cathedral in Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown Anglican Cathedral and in Stellenbosch. In Durban there is a possibility of 3 people fasting for the two week period at St Anthony's Church in Greyville.

At all the fast venues regular daily activities will take place. The public are encouraged to participate in these.

## IVAN TOMS

Dr Ivan Toms, an active member of the Cape Town ECC, is a medical doctor who for the past 5 years has been involved in setting up and working in a team in the Empilweni SACLA clinic - a Christian primary health care clinic serving the health needs of the 100 000 people who live in the Crossroads squatter camp. After graduating from the University of Cape Town in 1976 he served 2 years in the SADF. While in the SADF Ivan says that he was "able to reconcile the Christian injunction to love my enemy and the demand of the SADF to shoot him, so I applied for, and received, non-combatant status."

His experiences in Crossroads solidified these feelings. "There," says Ivan, "I have learned first hand of the viciousness of apartheid and the extreme oppression of the blacks. I have witnessed people shot indiscriminately by riot police and the SADF, people's shelters ruthlessly torn



down day in and day out for 3 weeks in 1983."

"Could I continue to serve in the SADF with war declared on the very people I work with and believe I am called by God to serve? Could I put on the SADF uniform - the same uniform that symbolises the oppressors in the townships? Some people want peace at any price, I believe the only peace that is meaningful is a just peace - where apartheid is abolished and people can live freely as citizens of a unified country, with a truly democratically elected government."

Ivan's views have convinced him to become a conscientious objector. He is liable to serve 3 years in jail if called up for further camps. In the meantime Ivan continues his work as a doctor as well as being an associate member of staff of the St John's parish, Wynberg.

"Fasting has a long Christian and political tradition", says Ivan. I have chosen to fast in order to protest against the oppression of blacks in what is now a civil war."

He is also concerned with the plight of the individual conscript. "The SADF's marching into the townships amounted to a declaration of war on fellow South

Africans. It is yet another step to uphold apartheid at all costs."

"In a situation like this where young men are expected to fire on fellow South Africans, the very least we can call for is that the individual conscript be given the right to decide **not** to go into the townships."

"For the three weeks that I fast in St George's Cathedral, Cape Town, my prayer is that many will recognise, with the ECC, the injustice of the use of troops in the townships, and will support the ECC's call - that troops be withdrawn from the townships now, and that we work for a just peace in our land."

"We call people nationally and internationally to join in a 24 hour fast to express solidarity with those who are suffering at the hands of the SADF in the townships and in so doing call with us for a just peace in South Africa."

## HAROLD WINKLER

Wits student Harold Winkler, an active member of ECC in Johannesburg, is fasting in support of the ECC's "Troops Out" call. "I face the dilemma of going into the townships myself," he says. "I was called up for the 13th of January next year. I do not believe that I can go to the army and remain sincere in my understanding of the Christian faith. I am therefore objecting to military service on religious grounds."



"Fasting is a time-honoured Christian tradition, being used for personal cleansing, and also for a whole nation to reflect on its situation, mourn its sinfulness, and petition God for help. Having grown up in a Christian family I have come to know fasting as an effective means of purification and protest. Therefore I have chosen this method of expressing my deep horror at what is happening in the townships."

"Fasting for three weeks will bring home to me that I am affected by all that goes on around me. The person on top of the Casspir could be my brother, or my friend - or me, and the one being sjambokked, teargassed, or shot could be my fellow-student from Wits. I feel that to put myself into such a situation or to support it, would be simply wrong."

"I believe that the fast will also help me personally, to reflect on my faith, and what that means for the situation in this country. Integrating my faith and life in this way is something I continually work towards, in the Young Christian Students, an ecumenical, non-racial student movement."

He sees his fasting as having a broader impact. Says Harold, "I hope that the fast will have effects on a far wider group of people. My particular concern is that the churches consider urgently where they stand in the growing conflict in South Africa. This fast is my small contribution towards initiating such processes, so that one day we may see a just peace in a non-racial, democratic South Africa."

## RICHARD STEELE

Richard Steele is the caretaker and programme coordinator of the Gandhi Phoenix settlement in Durban. He is an active member of the End Conscription Campaign and the Conscientious Objector Support Group. In 1980 he served 12 months in military detention for conscientious objection. During this time he fasted one day a week, and on one occasion for three days to protest repeated periods of solitary confinement.

Richard, who describes himself as a "political pacifist, committed to justice and equality through non-violent



action" is also involved in facilitating non-violent direct action training workshops.

He sees his fast as "a classic non-violent action in the face of massive violence on the part of the military, the state and even between community groups."

"When our social, political and emotional environment is in turmoil, we tend to react in stereotyped patterns, usually characterised by fear and

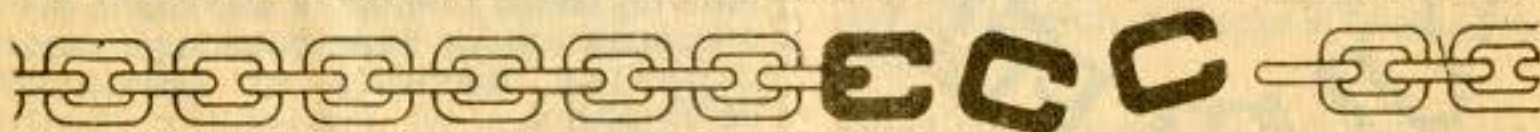
aggression. I see fasting as a conscious effort to step out of the spiral of such stereotyped behaviour," says Richard.

"I hope that the ECC fast will open up a space where we can be open in new ways to ourselves, each other, God, our environment and our society - I feel that this new openness can help us understand more fully what is happening in our country and how through our actions we can reach out for and grasp hold of a just peace."



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**TROOPS OUT NOW !**



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