



FACT SHEET

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION UNDER APARTHEID

South Africa has called itself a "christian state" and claims to be guided in its policies by christian principles. Government ministers and officials regularly invoke God, make religious pronouncements, and profess that they are better able to interpret the meaning of Christianity's demands for faithfulness, justice and compassion, than church leaders and theologians. It has been particularly sensitive, therefore, to criticism of injustice and apartheid by religious leaders from a biblical and theological perspective. There is copious evidence over a long period of time that religious freedom has been systematically limited. Clergy and laypeople have been the subject of intense scrutiny for their opposition to apartheid on religious principles. Many have been detained and tortured, forced into exile or deported, raided, harassed, had their phones tapped and their mail read, been investigated on questionable charges and been banned or restricted. This fact sheet describes some of the forms of religious persecution in South Africa.

Disruption of services: There are numerous examples of attacks by the South African Police on people gathered in church buildings for worship. Congregations have been

surrounded and ordered to leave a service. Tear smoke canisters have been hurled into packed buildings. Police have entered church buildings during services and beaten leaders and participants in worship.

Example: In early January 1987, a congregation of 2,000 people attending the funeral of Livingstone Ntlokwana at **Sisonke Presbyterian Church** at Zwide, Port Elizabeth was attacked. Police entered the church building, forced the clergy to depart, beat the mourners, chased them out of the building and loaded many into police trucks and took them away.

Detentions and torture: Clergy and church workers have been detained by the police. The actual number of detainees under the present state of emergency is not known but the Detainees Parents Support Committee has reported 134 detentions of clergy and church workers. These people, like a large majority of detainees, are tortured and interrogated.

Example: **Fr. Smangaliso Mkhathshwa**, Secretary General of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. Fr. Mkhathshwa, detained June 12, 1986, sought a court injunction, in August, against the

security police testifying that he had been stripped, tortured and interrogated continuously for thirty two hours. Fr. Mkhathshwa was previously detained 136 days beginning in August 1976, 5 months beginning in October 1977, and 4 months in 1983. Fr. Mkhathshwa was restricted by a banning order for eight years. There has also been a program of harassment including eviction orders and charges for possession of banned literature and arms.

Example: **The Rev. Simon Farisani**, Dean of the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa. Dean Farisani, an outspoken critic of apartheid, was detained for the fourth time from November 1986 to the end of January 1987. During previous periods of detention Dean Farisani was tortured.

Example: **Sr. Bernard Ncube**, a Roman Catholic nun. Sr. Bernard has been detained since June 12, 1986 and held incommunicado. She was the first president of the Federation of Transvaal Women. She has been active in the Kagiso Residents' Organization and helped obtain a court interdict against the activities of the police and soldiers in Kagiso. She worked with the Justice and Peace Commission of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference. Sr. Bernard has been detained on other occasions.

Many church workers and clergy, less well known outside South Africa, are in detention or have been detained and released. These include staff members of all of the regional councils of churches.

Restrictions and bannings: Many religious leaders have been restricted in past years by the imposition of a banning order, a government prohibition on movement, speaking, writing, and association. An unknown number of people has been served with restrictive orders during the state of emergency, in many cases people released from detention.

Example: **The Rt. Rev. Sigisbert Ndwandwe**, suffragan bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg, and chairman of the Anglican Church's Department of Justice and Recon-

ciliation. Bishop Ndwandwe was detained June 11, 1986. Although he was released in September, he was served with a set of restrictions which confine him to one district, prohibit him from attending any gathering at which any action or contemplated action of the government is criticized, and from participating in the Jouberton Civic Association. The geographical restrictions prevent him from travelling to churches under his pastoral care.

Example: **The Rev. Francois Bill**, General Secretary of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and of the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians (ABRECSA). Mr. Bill was released in March 1987 after nine months in detention. He was threatened with prosecution, but no charges were laid against him and he was subsequently released. However, he has been confined to Johannesburg, and he may not participate in ABRECSA, the Council of Churches, and the Theological Education by Extension College. He is prohibited from preparing anything for publication, from addressing a meeting other than a church service, and from attending meetings at which policies or actions of the government are criticized.

Raids on offices and homes: Church offices and the homes of church leaders have been entered and searched repeatedly. The police have targeted ecumenical organizations such as the South African Council of Churches in Johannesburg, and Diakonia in Durban for the raids which are designed to disrupt the work of the organization and intimidate its workers and supporters. Books and papers are removed during the raids.

Example: **The Rev. Alfred Dlamini**, the Director of Social Responsibility of the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown. Mr. Dlamini's home at Peddie was raided March 17, 1987 at 11pm while he was attending a church conference in Johannesburg. The soldiers questioned his wife at gunpoint and ransacked the house saying that they were looking for guns. Neighbors estimated that sixty soldiers conducted the raid.

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