

## GUEST EDITORIAL:

### South African Church Leaders Protest Restrictions on Eighteen Antiapartheid Organizations

*This statement was released after a February 25, 1988 emergency meeting of South African church leaders in Johannesburg. It refers to the "crisis" created by government restrictions on "eighteen of our leaders" and urges "major services of witness and protest against the strictions" on Sunday, February 28.*

... We believe the restrictions represent a desperate attempt by weak people to hold onto power in the face of an ever-increasing determination by the oppressed of our country to bring about justice, democracy and peace.

The government's drastic and brutal action removes nearly all effective means open to our people of working for true change by peaceful means. . . .

The ban on the activities of the seventeen organizations is a blow directed at the heart of the church's mission in South Africa.

Firstly, the organizations which have been banned are the organizations of and for our people.

#### **We Will Continue to Proclaim the Gospel in South Africa**

Secondly, the activities which have been prohibited are central to the proclamation of the Gospel in our country.

We must make it quite clear that, no matter what the consequences, we will continue as a matter of course to campaign for the release of prisoners, to call for clemency for those under sentence of death, to call for the unbanning of political organizations, to call for negotiations involving the true leaders of our country to bring about a transfer of power from a minority to all the people of our country, to commemorate significant events in the life of our nation, to commemorate those who have died in what the state calls "riots", and to call upon the international community to apply pressure to force the government to the negotiating table.

Our mandate to carry out these activities comes from God and no man and no government will stop us. If the state wants to act against the church of God in this country for proclaiming the Gospel, then so be it.

#### **We Condemn Restrictions On Our Leaders**

Thirdly, at least one prominent church leader known to us has been banned and house arrested in terms of yesterday's regulations . . . . Dr. Simon Gqubule, principal of the Methodist Church's John Wesley Colleges [vice-president of the South African Council of Churches] . . . . We know Dr. Gqubule to be a man dedicated to justice and peace in our country and we condemn the restrictions on him—as we condemn the restrictions placed on all our other leaders—in the strongest terms we can muster.

We find it particularly horrifying that the government has restricted two leaders, two of the presidents of the United Democratic Front, in the persons of Mrs. Albertina Sisulu and Mr. Archie Gumede, who were until yesterday tireless workers in the cause of peace in two of the most desperate crisis areas in our land. Mrs. Sisulu has been struggling to bring about peace between opposing groups in KTC, a squatter area near Cape Town. It is widely acknowledged that Mr. Gumede has been a key advocate of peace in the fighting in Maritzburg.

#### **South African Authorities Deliberately Obstruct Peace**

We believe the time has come to state the truth clearly as we see it. . . . We must conclude that the authorities are deliberately obstructing peace in our country and encouraging violence among our people.

Their purpose is to use surrogate forces to smash effective opposition to their heretical policy of apartheid and to ensure that as far as possible that it is the blood of black people, and not of white people, that is spilled in pursuance of their aim. . . .

#### **We Must Intensify The Struggle For Justice and Peace**

... We must address primarily the oppressed people in our land for it is they who will decide in the final analysis when apartheid is going to be abolished. We urge the oppressed to intensify the struggle for justice and peace in accordance with the Gospel and we encourage them not to lose hope for victory against evil in this world is guaranteed by our Lord.

For our part, we commit ourselves to exploring every possible avenue . . . to carry out the activities which have been banned insofar as we believe they are mandated by the Gospel.

To the white voters of South Africa we must say—without much hope of being heard—your are being deceived by the government. Your fellow South Africans want nothing more than to live in a just and peaceful country. Your position is becoming untenable and we believe that you must dissociate yourselves from this government.

Apartheid is a heresy—you can't reform heresy—and if you are to assure your future, you must now pull out of "white politics" and join the real struggle for democracy.

#### **International Community Wake Up**

We now hope the international community—and especially South Africa's major trading partners—will wake up to the fact that this illegitimate government is threatening their interests as well as the lives and security of black and white South Africans.

It has shown quite clearly that it has nothing to offer but instability and bloodshed. It must be isolated to force it off the awful path it has chosen....

*"We hoped for peace, but no good has come; for a time of healing, but there was only terror."*

*Jer. 8:15*