



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW

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At the Baragwanath Hospital in South Africa's black township of Soweto, the sick, injured and dying wait in long lines to use the toilets and showers. They lie on the floor, under beds, on staircases -- because there is only one available bed for every two patients.

In nearby Johannesburg General Hospital which serves only whites, more than half of the 1,800 beds sit empty. The hospital is off-limits to black patients except in life-threatening emergencies.

The brute inhumanity of this situation triggered a remarkable protest on August 2. Seventy black patients walked into the emergency room of the white Johannesburg General Hospital to register for treatment.

That simple act of courage was like a spark in a haystack. It ignited the Defiance Campaign, which again brought anti-apartheid protestors in direct confrontation with the South African government.

Predictably, the response of the South African government has been swift, unrelenting and vicious. And once again, the struggle against apartheid has moved into the courtrooms.

Here, truly, is where you and I can make a significant difference. Since 1967, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law has put apartheid on trial in its own courts of law -- defending the rights of protesters, challenging repressive laws, lending moral support to an embattled people.

This vital work depends critically on you and your generous gifts. Now, as the South African government inflicts new barbarisms and illegalities on members of the Defiance Campaign, won't you help us carry on this fight for human dignity?

Organized through a loose coalition of groups known as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), the Defiance Campaign protestors are challenging every aspect of apartheid policy -- segregated facilities, detentions, bannings, restrictions on civil liberties, and the exclusion of the majority black population from voting in the September 6 elections.

In response to the Campaign, the South African government made the weeks before the September 6 elections the bloodiest and most violent in recent history. As one newspaper account put it, "...the greater Cape Town area exploded into violence on a scale eclipsing the political turmoil of 1985-1986."

By early September, the blood in the streets and the horrified international outcry persuaded F.W. de Klerk, the new President, to allow 20,000 protestors to stage a legal demonstration -- a significant concession made to buy time and curry international favor.

But protest leaders know that the government is not about to forswear the use of violence or dismantle apartheid. Hundreds remain in jail. The machinery of apartheid remains fully intact. The "state of emergency" is still in force. And the repression continues.

Just ask Yasmin Moolla of the South Africa Health Workers' Congress. During the turmoil in August, she saw police line up and fire at a group of children without even giving them a warning. "It looked as if the cops had aimed straight for their faces." They were teargassed, shot with rubber bullets, birdshot and buckshot.

"It was horrific," Moolla reports. "You read about these things but you don't believe that adults can do this to children." Other eyewitnesses gave these accounts:

"The cops were shooting recklessly. They were getting out of their Casspurs and vans and aiming at people."  
(Faghied Johnson, Manenberg Advice Office)

"It looked like a battlefield....a lot of children and people who were returning from work were shot as they were walking home....Children sitting on the staircases of their homes were also shot." (Reverend Jan de Waal)

Thousands of activists in the Defiance Campaign -- and journalists who attempted to cover it -- have been arrested. Many under age 18. Trade union offices and the homes of activists have been raided by police. Church windows have been smashed, church doors sealed off, and police armed with guns and whips have stormed sanctuaries searching for protesters.

Grim as the situation is, the anti-apartheid movement has been able to score important victories. And a great many of these victories have been achieved through the work of the Lawyers' Committee's Southern Africa Project.

By hiring lawyers to defend anti-apartheid activists, the Lawyers' Committee has forced government prosecutors to dismiss trumped-up charges and release detainees being held without charges. The Project has brought lawsuits to challenge apartheid laws, illegal police practices, torture and imprisonment.

At the inquests of those murdered by apartheid's police, our lawyers have helped defend the legal rights of the victims' families. We have enlisted volunteer lawyers in the United States to work with human rights lawyers in South Africa.

Drawing upon a network of over 100 dedicated attorneys in South Africa, the Project has exposed political show trials as farces....won acquittals and shorter prison sentences....convinced courts to commute death sentences....and provided distinguished legal scholars and jurists to serve as international observers at South African trials.

Yes, even in South Africa, the law can be used to protect protestors. But, as might be expected, this special brand of lawyering requires a special tenacity, resourcefulness and courage.

It also requires the steadfast support of people like you and me: individuals who are not only offended by the moral, human horror of apartheid, but who are also willing to take concrete steps to help stop it.

One of the most effective ways for concerned Americans to lend support to Archbishop Tutu and other anti-apartheid activists is to help the Lawyers' Committee's Southern Africa Project.

For the past 22 years, the Southern Africa Project has shown that creative, persistent lawyers can make a difference in the fight against apartheid. We can challenge repressive laws and illegal acts, free prisoners, and win acquittals and more lenient sentences.

But this challenge grows more difficult with each passing day. And so we turn once again to you to appeal for your continued support.

This is the time of year when we traditionally ask you to renew your gift to the Southern Africa Project. This year, because of the critical needs in that nation, we ask that you increase your contribution if you possibly can.

You should bear in mind that the special advocacy of the Southern Africa Project provides more than legal assistance. It also offers hope to those who are languishing in jail, those who are courageously resisting the government, those who are mourning the political assassinations of loved ones.

Your contribution makes a powerful statement of international solidarity with the anti-apartheid protesters -- and helps influence U.S. policymakers as they decide our nation's stance toward South Africa.

In every generation there is a small band of people who form the honor guard of freedom -- the people who keep the faith long after the hoopla is over and the summer soldiers have gone home.

That steadfast support is needed today as never before. So please, give as if someone's life and freedom and human dignity depended upon it -- because it does.

Sincerely,



Gay J. McDougall  
Director  
Southern Africa Project

Enclosures