

RELIGIOUS ACTION NETWORK

for justice and peace in southern Africa

a project of the American Committee on Africa

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FOUNDING MEMBERS (Partial listing)

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9th April, 1993.

To : Members of the Religious Action Network and friends of the
South African Council of Churches.

From : Jennifer Davis.

Re : Report from Aleah Bacquie, in South Africa.

As you may recall from the last RAN communication, Aleah Bacquie, co-ordinator of the Religious Action Network for the last three years, has now been seconded by RAN to the South African Council of Churches. She will serve there as International Press Officer, a role which will enable her to keep concerned members of the religious community in the U.S. briefed on critical developments as they occur. We hope this will compensate for the very scanty reporting in the press and media, which make it almost impossible to assess what is really happening, as South Africans are compelled to sustain a bitter struggle along even the last mile to freedom day.

I enclose the first of her reports. We hope these will be helpful to you as you continue your longstanding and vital support for the people of South Africa, who have still not reached the end of the age of apartheid.

The South African Council of Churches

*"The Crucified God and the Easter God -
Seeing the Light in the Darkness"*

FAX to: GLOBAL PARTNERS

Of:

Date: APRIL 2, 1993

Your fax no.:

Pages including this:

From: ALEAH BAKQUE

Department: COMMUNICATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHURCH LEADERS STATEMENT for Global Partners

On March 30 and 31 leaders from twenty-two South African churches and two church organizations met near Johannesburg to discuss a host of issues confronting South African society today. The meeting opened with devotions and prayer, and an understanding that church leaders were needed to "cooperate with each other to address the current situation and the transition to democracy," as well as "build and share a dream of the future" of South Africa. This broad representation of clergy meet regularly to discuss matters of national weight. There was a genuine feeling of comradeship and respect throughout the proceedings which allowed for a relatively smooth exchange of ideas, even with so many controversial issues at hand. The critical nature of the present South African situation demands it.

The underlying theme of the positions in the statement and attached letters is that of justice and reconciliation for South African society, with a speedy transition to freedom day. The church leaders are convinced that true reconciliation, however, can take place only after confession (public disclosure), repentance (taking appropriate public action), and a commitment to justice (making appropriate changes where possible to prevent the recurrence of such behavior). The Church Leaders were united.

South African churches, and the SACC in particular, have been calling for the resumption of negotiations for several months. CODESA II deadlocked over the determination of the numbers required for the adoption of a Bill of Rights and new constitution. The resulting suspension of multi-party talks, which lasted almost 12 months, further delayed the announcement of an election date which churches had been calling for since at least November 1992. It is their contention that the violence and other measures were used to delay the end of white minority rule in South Africa as incidents of violence followed almost every point of progress in the talks or possibility of talks.

The South African government's control, and thus the Nationalist Party's control over the South African Broadcasting Corporation has resulted in cases of extreme bias and censorship. As the country moves closer to the establishment of an election date, the churches recognized the necessity for an independent and impartial broadcasting authority whose content is not determined by one political party. The government has delayed the process of the transition to an independent SABC board and De Klerk was attempting to control the selection of a new board when the church leaders gathered for this meeting. Furthermore the attempts to continue controlling the content of religious broadcasting which churches insist should be regulated by the religious bodies themselves.

Several church leaders expressed great concern for the situation in Angola and stressed that preventative measures be taken to insure no foreshadowing of a similar South African scenario. They were hard pressed to understand how a full-scale civil war could break out, claiming thousands of lives and no international agent or body take any decisive action to respond significantly. Thus, church leaders are convinced that preventative measures, such as the integration of armed forces under one command structure, are imperative. They call for United Nations involvement in the elections process to insure that no one party be allowed to refuse to respect election results. It is within a climate of global acceptance of ignored election results in neighboring states and political violence that claimed 3,500 South African lives in 1992 that they encourage the formulation of a joint command of armed forces.

Twenty-six parties are now participating in the current negotiations. There has been talk of excluding the Pan Africanist Congress for the alleged involvement of its military wing, APLA, in attacks on white civilians. In fact, revelations and accusations of violent activity have been made against most of the principle players in the negotiations process, including the government. Additionally, the purpose of the multi-party talks is to get as wide a representation as possible included in the decision making about how the transition for democracy should take place. Exclusion of any group would only result in greater alienation of some sector of South African society. Thus, the church leaders assert that no political party should be denied participation in the negotiations process.

The Church Leaders also maintained their position condemning the use of violence. In line with previous positions, they called for a meeting with the PAC to discuss the public perception of APLA involvement in attacks against civilians.

They further called on every political party to act appropriately and publicly against any of its members engaged in violent action. This statement was also applied to State President De Klerk who has remained silent about testimony and documentation implicating his head of military intelligence, General Van Der Westhuizen in the murders of several anti-apartheid activists. Church Leaders contend that Van Der Westhuizen should be suspended pending public investigations into

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the revelations.

The statement on corruption comes after several revelations of mismanagement, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability. Army officers have been implicated in hit squad activities resulting in their removals from service with excessively generous retirement packages, commonly referred to as "golden handshakes". Government ministers have remained in their private homes to be administered huge sums of money (R150,000/ \$30,000.) reserved for separate ministerial accommodation in addition to their salaries. In the well-known "Toilet Scandal" the Department of Development Aid spent millions of rands building infrastructure in isolated areas in a pathetic attempt to lure Blacks away from their homes in areas designated for incorporation into the "homelands". The Church Leaders believe that the numerous incidents of scandal and corruption have poisoned South African society to the point where it is expected and accepted.

✓ Enclosed.

The statement follows in full. Attached is the statement on corruption and the letter to State President De Klerk regarding the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

not
attach

If further information is needed regarding any of the positions taken at the Church Leaders Meeting or on other issues not included in the statement, do not hesitate to contact me. Any feedback would be greatly appreciated as it would help me service you better.

Aleah Bacquie
International Press Officer
April 2, 1993

CHURCH LEADERS' MEETING MARCH 1993

Representatives of many South African Churches, as listed below, met for two days, March 30th and 31st 1993, to discuss the state of the Church and the state of the Nation. The following statement is issued on the agreed decisions of that meeting.

1. THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS.

The Church Leaders applaud the recent impetus given to the negotiation process. We look forward to the multi-party meetings beginning later this week, bringing a new sense of purpose to the process, and assure all concerned of the prayerful support of all represented at this meeting.

1.1. DATE FOR AN ELECTION

The Church Leaders state, yet again, that there is an urgent need for an election date (before the end of the year) to be announced. This, it is believed, will give ordinary South African people much needed hope. The process of transition has been slower than anticipated and there is a need to indicate that it will lead in a set period of time to an election in which all will participate.

We appeal to those engaged in the negotiation process toward a just and democratic dispensation to heed this call and treat with the utmost urgency the need to announce a date for the election.

1.2. INDEPENDENT MEDIA

The Church Leaders support the Declaration of the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting calling for a broadcast system independent of the government of the day and of party political interests.

The Church Leaders also realise the importance of an independent and impartial broadcasting authority in the run-up to an election. In so doing, they support the calls by the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting for an independent SABC Board, an independent regulatory authority for broadcasting, a moratorium on unilateral restructuring at the SABC, and one national public broadcast service.

A fax message has been sent to the State President from this meeting, deploring the unnecessary delay in the process toward a new SABC Board and suggesting that the matter be treated with urgency, so that a new Board can be in place by May 1st 1993.

During this meeting news has been received of even further delays in the procedure, including a government proposal to make the process private as well as contain a measure of discretion to remain in the hands of the State President. The Church Leaders oppose any such moves and are convinced that open public appointment of the Board, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting, is essential.

The Church Leaders are deeply disturbed at the number of occasions upon which already agreed procedures have later been brought back to the negotiation table by government representatives. This not only delays the appointment of the SABC Board, but causes us to call into question the good faith of the government in the total process of the negotiations toward a new dispensation.

In regard to Religious Broadcasting the Church Leaders endorse in principle the statement made by the National Executive of the SACC at its meeting of March 2nd and 3rd 1993, note with interest the meetings that have been held and are planned to be held about religious broadcasting, and give their special endorsement to the principles that:

- a) The content of religious broadcasting must be under the control of religious bodies and not the broadcaster.
- b) The process toward a Religious Broadcasting Forum needs to be independent of the SABC.
- c) All representatives in such a forum need to be directly appointed by the participating religious bodies.

1.3. CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES

The Church Leaders call on the government, and all who take part in the negotiation process, to accept that for the sake of peace and stability all armed forces need to be placed under a joint command. Arrangements for such a joint command require urgent attention so as to promote peace and the confidence of the entire population in a united armed force that is accountable to the people through its democratically chosen representatives and not to one sector of the nation only.

1.4. PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

The Church Leaders are encouraged by the increased level of participation in the negotiating forum. In particular we are gratified that the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) has agreed to take part.

The Church Leaders welcomed a delegation from the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) to exchange views on the state of the nation, the relationship between AZAPO and the Churches, as well as to encourage an AZAPO presence in the negotiation process.

The Church Leaders are of the opinion that no political party should be denied participation in the negotiations so that the voices of all are heard and the process is truly representative of all the people. We do not believe that the public perception of APLA involvement in attacks upon innocent civilians should be used to exclude the PAC from the negotiation table.

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2. THE ELECTION PROCESS

The Church Leaders accepted in principle a plan for a programme of Religious Leaders for Electoral Justice. This plan would create a body of Religious Leaders engaged in a procedure of mediation in the electoral process to help ensure that it is just and to assist in a climate of peace and stability.

The Justice and Social Ministries Department of the South African Council of Churches is encouraged to take the matter further. The Church Leaders endorsed proposed plans for a meeting in April to discuss the programme in detail and set in motion the national and international participation necessary for its fulfilment.

The Church Leaders also call for direct international involvement through the United Nations Security Council in the election process in South Africa to assist in the process itself and ensure that all parties respect the outcome of an election.

3. ANGOLA

Concern is expressed over the horrific situation that has developed in Angola since the dispute over the results of its election. We call on the international community to recognise the elected government of Angola and thereby respect the democratic choice of the people of that nation.

A special call is made upon the President of the United States of America and the South African government to be seen to correct the damage done in Angola through their past support of UNITA and its leader, Jonas Savimbi.

4. VIOLENCE

The violence within the nation remains a cause of deep concern.

The Church Leaders condemn the use of violence. This word at this moment is spoken particularly, though not exclusively, to APLA and the PAC, with the request that a meeting is held as soon as possible to discuss this matter.

The condemnation of violence also means that we call on any political party that discovers that any of its members has engaged in violent action to take appropriate action in public.

Wherever force is used to frighten people or destroy opposition it stands condemned. After so many years of violent oppression the country is in need of peaceful transition to democracy and everything must be done to ensure such peaceful progress.

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In this regard we are concerned at the silence and inactivity of the government over the accusations levelled against its own security force personnel in the case concerning Matthew Goniwe and others. How can the people be expected to have any confidence in a security force where some of its senior officers are implicated in serious cases of murder and no action is taken against them.

We call on the State President to immediately suspend General van den Westhuizen and institute public investigations into the revelations of acts of terror allegedly involving him, other top level security force officials and possibly even cabinet ministers.

The recent revelations about the nuclear capability of South Africa illustrate the pointless repetition of denials and the need for the government to demonstrate to the national and international community a commitment to honesty and to abandon any attempts to cover up its own violent history.

The attempts to divert attention toward General Bantu Holomisa of the Transkei do not go unnoticed. It is his revelations that point to government security force involvement in the death of Matthew Goniwe and possibly many others.

In this regard also we express concern over the governments unilateral action in using heavy military presence to seal off the Transkei as one would deal with an aggressive enemy, before any such aggression has been proved. It is ironic that the governments own creation is now a source of such embarrassment to its maker. General Holomisa is using the training received in the ranks of the South African Defence Force to make his stand.

We are glad to note that General Holomisa and State President de Klerk will be meeting soon. We trust they will find a solution to the present impasse based on transparent honesty and not belicose attacks or attempts to cover up the truth.

5. THE DEATH PENALTY

Letters are to be sent to members of parliament to protest against the possible re-imposition of the death penalty, especially during an interim period prior to a democratic election and a fully representative parliament.

6. A letter is to be sent to the State President expressing the horror experienced by the Church Leaders at the revelations of a hidden nuclear capability and requesting a number of guarantees on the matter.

CHURCH LEADERS MEETING
March 31st 1993

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List of Churches and Church Organisations represented at the Church Leaders Meeting held March 30th and 31st 1993.

African Catholic Church
African Congregational Church
African Methodist Episcopal Church
Baptist Convention
Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Anglican)
Council of African Independent Churches
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
Hervormde Kerk in Suidelike Afrika
International Fellowship of Christian Churches
Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Moravian Church in Southern Africa
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending Kerk
Order of Ethiopia
Paris Evangelical Church in Southern Africa
Presbyterian Church of Africa
Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
Reformed Presbyterian Church in South Africa
Religious Society of Friends
South African Catholic Bishops' Conference
South African Council of Churches
United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
Volkskerk van Afrika