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S African 'white hospitals' treat blacks

JOHANNESBURG: Scores of black patients demanding medical attention were admitted to "whites only" hospitals yesterday for the first time after pressure from an anti-apartheid campaign.

Organisers promised a mounting campaign of defiance against the government.

At least 260 sick black people were treated in whites-only hospitals in Transvaal and Natal provinces.

"The defiance campaign will be taken to every corner and every section of society until apartheid is unworkable," trade union leader Mr Jay Naidoo told a rally at Johannesburg's medical school.

Hospital authorities readily treated some of the black patients but referred others to black hospitals.

Victory

The union, youth and other groups, allied as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), said the protest was an initial victory in a campaign set to culminate with a week of as yet unspecified action before general elections on September 6.

The black majority cannot vote in the parliamentary polls.

The Health Minister, Mr Willie van Niekerk, scoffed at the campaign, saying: "Sick people were used as pawns by a small group of radicals."

"Any changes in health legislation will occur inside and not outside Parliament."

An MDM spokesman, Mr Cas Coovadia, said pressure against segregation of hospitals would not let up.

"From today we will ensure

that the people in the vicinity of whites-only hospitals will get admitted there," Mr Coovadia told the rally. "Should they be refused treatment, we will make sure that the whole world gets to know about it."

The campaign will broaden, with individuals and organisations openly defying government restrictions in a series of open challenges to emergency regulations.

A spokesman for the United Democratic Front (UDF), which has been largely silent since it was forbidden early last year to carry out any political activities, said the umbrella group would "unban itself" by holding an overtly political meeting.

On Sunday, people bound to their homes after dark under official restriction orders will break their curfew by attending an evening church service. A few openly defied restrictions yesterday by attending a political meeting.

MDM leaders says the protests aim to be peaceful, but the Government has accused it of stirring up violence.

Two hand grenades were thrown into the Soweto township home of a black police colonel yesterday evening, severely injuring one of his two sons and wounding him and the other boy less seriously.

In the only tense confrontation reported in yesterday's protests, police stopped coloured school pupils from joining a march in the centre of Cape Town's suburb of Mitchell's Plain.

Witnesses said the police fired tear gas and youths built barricades across streets.

Other protests yesterday involved black mineworkers using a canteen for whites



and riding whites-only buses.

MDM members had expressed fears of attack on the hospital protesters by extreme right-wing whites, after the distribution of leaflets threatening them with death in the name of a shadowy group called the White Wolves.

The largest protest turnout was at Durban's Addington Hospital, which treated 150

non-white patients while about 2000 protesters gathered outside.

The only arrests connected with the demonstration were of 12 middle-aged white women of the anti-apartheid Black Sash movement who were held briefly by police after picketing a main road in Johannesburg in support of the defiance campaign.

Reuters



A white nurse tends a black patient at the whites-only Johannesburg Hospital (above) while