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CHILDREN UNDER APARTHEID

SPEECH GIVEN TO THE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN

BY AUDREY COLEMAN OF THE DETAINEES PARENTS SUPPORT COMMITTEE

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Friends,

We in the Detainees Parents Support Committee would like to thank the organisers of this conference for the opportunity and honour speaking at this conference today.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt appreciation of all the efforts you have made, as part of the democratic international community, in contributing towards the ending of the pernicious system of Apartheid we have in South Africa. We believe that Apartheid is the most evil and ugly stain on the face of the globe today. It is, in those often quoted words, a 'crime against humanity', and we hope that the whole of humanity will bring it to a rapid and permanent end.

I have been asked to address you today in particular on the plight of children under Apartheid.

It is often noted that the children of today benefit from the efforts of past generations without ever really being conscious of the debt they owe their ancestors.

The same could be said of the children of the struggle. Today, the younger generation of black South Africans hardly pauses in its efforts to overthrow Apartheid. The youth are laying down their lives and risking their limbs in their pursuit of democracy, freedom and a decent life for all South Africans.

From where do they get such courage, such determination, such strength?

Part of the answer lies in our proud past, in our long tradition of struggle against oppression and exploitation. It was the efforts of previous generations of activists, and our still active elder statesmen and stateswomen, that laid a tough foundation on which today's spirit of resistance is built.

I talk, of course, of the efforts of legendary figures like King Chetswayo, who led his people in resisting the conquest of their land by British, Dutch and Boer settlers. I talk of great people

like Pixley ka Seme and John Dube, who founded the African National Congress in 1912 to resist the infamous Land Act which forced the entire African population into only 13 percent of the land.

I talk too of all those brave people like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and others who have sacrificed their liberty to carry forward the torch of freedom. And, like Oliver Tambo, all those who have been forced to leave their homes and families temporarily to carry on their struggle in exile.

But most of all, I talk of the ordinary men and women whom history books record not as individuals, but as generations; those people who have slaved for years in our gold mines and factories, who have struck for a living wage and decent working conditions, who have participated in mass meetings and Defiance Campaigns, who have laid down their lives marching to Sharpeville, who have sacrificed everything resisting removals, pass arrests, homeland independance, and all other institutions and practices of apartheid.

This struggle has been going on almost uninterrupted for over 300 years. It has been the struggle of a people robbed of their birthright by the whites who first landed in our country with the intention of setting up a trading post on the route from Europe to the East. What they found was not a trading post, but a country rich in land, human and mineral wealth.

It was this wealth which these Boer, British and Dutch settlers were determined to seize and keep for themselves. It took them 250 years to achieve this. Despite their guns and cannon, their combined might was resisted by the spears and shields of the African people.

Once the settlers took control, they were faced by the question of how they would keep and exploit their potential riches. At the turn of this century the land-barons and mine and factory owners set about constructing a system of control over the indigenous inhabitants which would force them to acquiesce politically and economically to the whims of the wealthy.

Politically, the vast African majority was a potential threat to white control over the colonial government. Economically, their labour was needed at rock-bottom prices to return huge profits. The powerful captains of industry wanted African workers where they needed them, when they needed them, in the condition they needed them, and at a price they needed them.

This system was worked out and refined over the next 80 years. Laws were introduced to dominate blacks politically. Repressive might was centralised to dominate militarily. The homelands were created as huge reservoirs of cheap labour, always at the cheapest price and always in need of work to survive. The pass laws, influx control and the Group Areas were set up to control where Africans lived and worked.

This vast and elaborate structure of political domination and economic exploitation has been based on colour, and has become known simply as Apartheid. Apartheid enables the wealthy whites to maintain their political and economic stranglehold over the wealth and people of South Africa.

For so long as this system was being set up and so long as it has functioned, there has been resistance. For brevity, I will mention only the watershed events in the history of resistance.

In 1912 the African National Congress was formed to lead the non-violent resistance movement. But just short of its fiftieth anniversary it was outlawed by the Apartheid government, was forced to forego peaceful struggle, and went underground and into exile.

During its legal existence the ANC achieved many noteworthy goals. But one stands out for special mention: under its leadership, and in alliance with other democratic organisations a two-year long campaign was launched in 1953 to establish what kind of society the disenfranchised majority wanted. The result of the campaign was the drawing up of the Freedom Charter, which remains the guiding beacon of the progressive movement even today.

The main demands of the Freedom Charter are that:

- * The People Shall Govern
- * The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth
- * The Land Shall be Shared Amongst those who Work it
- * All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights
- * The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened
- * There Shall be Work and Security for all
- * There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort
- * There Shall be Peace and Friendship

Those supporting the demands of the Charter, and who have organised actively to achieve them, have paid the price for being so fundamentally at odds with the objectives and policies of Apartheid.

Since the Congress of the People, where the Charter was adopted, the Apartheid State has increased its repression of opposition. It started with the Congress movement itself, banning, harassing and jailing its leaders. This period of repression and resistance culminated in the declaration of the State of emergency in 1960 after the Sharpeville shootings. Realising it was losing the hold over the majority of the people led by their organisations, the government detained 1 500 people and prosecuted another 12 000, mainly for offences related to the pass laws.

Compared to today's emergency these figures seem to be shocking. But for that generation of activists the struggle was severe. It was only through their determination and courage that they were able to continue resisting effectively. So much so

that, in 1961, the government took the more drastic step of outlawing the ANC and the Pan African Congress. In 1963 detention without trial was written into the Statute Books for the first time in South Africa.

Since then tens of thousands of people have been held in solitary confinement detention - some for as long as two and a half years without access to family or lawyers.

Once more the leaders and people of the time rose to the challenge. While being jailed, forced underground and into exile, they kept the flame of resistance alive. Their efforts left a legacy of lessons and courage which provided the foundations on which the successive generations have been able to resist ever-increasing levels of repression.

Consider these words:

"The government set out ... to present us as wild, dangerous revolutionaries, intent on disorder and riot, incapable of being dealt with in any way save by mustering an overwhelming force against us and the implementation of every possible forcible means, legal and illegal, to suppress us. The government behaved in a way no civilised government should dare to behave when faced with a peaceful, disciplined, sensible and democratic expression of the views of its own population ...

"(The government) set the scene for violence by relying exclusively on violence with which to answer our people and their demands. The counter-measures they took ... grew out of the knowledge that their policy did not enjoy the support of the majority of the people, while ours did. It was clear that the government was trying to combat the intensity of the campaign by a reign of terror."

One could be forgiven for thinking that these words were spoken by someone in South Africa just yesterday. In fact, they were the words used by Nelson Mandela in his 1962 trial in giving testimony on the government's use of force to crush the non-violent campaigns of the 1950's and 1960's.

The period of regrouping and reorganisation ended with the mass worker strikes of 1973 and the national student uprising of 1976. Despite the brutal repression of 1976 and 1977, organisation and resistance has taken root, particularly in the ranks of the youth, students and workers.

The Congress of South African Students was formed almost immediately after the banning of the student organisations which led the 1976 uprisings. In only six years it superseded all previous student organisations in size and strength. At the time of its banning in August 1985 Cosas claimed the support of half of the 6 million students in South Africa.

The independent labour movement also grew rapidly in size and

strength, culminating in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions in November last year. With a paid-up membership of 700 000, Cosatu too is the largest organisation in its sector in our history.

There has also been the rapid growth of civic and political organisations since 1976. Many of these came together in August 1983 in the United Democratic Front. The UDF was launched as a broad front of organisations to oppose apartheid and take forward the fight for freedom and non-racialism. It is testimony to its massive popularity that the UDF today has 800 affiliated organisations with over 2 million members representing organised residents, women, youth, students and workers.

The formation of the UDF inspired areas and groups to organise the unorganised. In one month in 1984 alone, 50 youth organisations sprang up in the Transvaal province. In remote rural areas villages established UDF branches.

All of these organisations were taking up issues of high rent, transport and cost of living increases. They fight rampant unemployment, inflation and extremely low wages. They fight bad living and working conditions, as well as the lack of democratic representation. They have resisted government-imposed bodies, the army occupation of townships, and police repression.

Students have demanded the scrapping of the racist education system and the removal of troops from the schools. They have called for democratic control in the schools, and have fought overcrowding, the lack of facilities, textbooks and trained teachers. They have also challenged the content and quality of their education. The success of their struggle has seriously undermined the state policy of Bantu Education, and a number of victories have been won.

The resistance and repression have increased dramatically every year. But something of a turning point was reached in September 1984 when parents and youth united over a number of issues. There was an uprising in Sebokeng in the Vaal over rent increases. The state response was swift. 7 000 S.A.D.F. troops were sent in to occupy the township and conduct door-to-door searches - the first time in many years the army was used for internal repression.

Since then repressive violence against the people has intensified on every level. September 1984 marked the beginning of the constant civil war in which we now find ourselves.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DETAINEES PARENTS SUPPORT COMMITTEE

It is in the context of this history that I think the emergence of the Detainees Parents Support Committee should be placed, as well as our understanding of children in South Africa today.

The D.P.S.C. was founded in August 1981 as a spontaneous response of family and friends of a large group of people detained at the time. This group was made up of very different people from all walks of life. But they all had something in common - they had been affected by that early morning banging at the door that signalled yet another detention.

My husband and I knew some of the detained. But we never realised that so soon we would personally be affected.

Two months later came the knock at our door. It was the security police who wanted to put my son behind bars for reasons which only they knew, but would not say. It was a knock which brought five months of anguish. But it was a knock which also opened a door of perception for my husband and I. When our son was detained five short years ago, my husband and I joined the D.P.S.C.

While we had always been aware of the injustices of apartheid, it was then that we first really felt the heartache of having a loved one wrenched away by almost omnipotent Security Policemen. Forced into solitary confinement for five months, our son had access only to his interrogators and tormentors.

As it turns out, our son was one of the lucky few who was not too badly treated. He was not tortured. But at the time, we immediately feared for his safety. Our heads were filled with images of torture scenes, of Security Policemen kicking and beating our son, of airless bags pulled tightly over his head, of electric shocks applied to every region of his body. We knew of the allegations of torture. We knew of the 50 people who had been taken into the Security cells, only to leave them in coffins. We had read reports of the inquests into their deaths, and had no doubt in our minds about the terrors of the cells. And we also knew that, even if our son was 'not treated too badly', a person held in solitary confinement for any length of time would suffer psychological damage, no matter how strong and how committed a person he was.

You can imagine the shock it was to hear of the death in detention of Neil Aggett a short two months later. You can imagine the outrage we and most South Africans felt that Neil became the 51st person to die in dark and secret custody.

The D.P.S.C. had small beginnings. We began by protesting the detentions with placard demonstrations, we publicised the detentions both home and abroad, and tried to make known the terrible conditions and effects of detentions.

When some of our sons and daughters were released, we listened to descriptions of their detention experiences and immediately drew in doctors to treat people upon their release from detention. We also established a counselling service to deal with the psychological effects of torture and long periods of solitary confinement.

Something of a turning point was reached when we published a memorandum on torture a few months later. This was the first time in many years that torture allegations had been documented, and it sent some shock waves through the public and even forced the government to launch a supposedly objective enquiry into the allegations. Low-key as their enquiry was, they could not squash the issue quickly enough.

More importantly perhaps, the memorandum drew attention to the types of people being detained.

They were mostly students, trade unionists, community and media workers, leaders of civic organisations, clergy and others. All were people committed to working for fundamental and democratic change in South Africa. They were the very people that most societies would look upon as thinking people to listen to, nurture and protect. But what most societies may see as virtues, our government sees as a threat. And the threat these people level at the government is to end the racist, unjust, undemocratic and oppressive system known as Apartheid.

The Apartheid State believes that by detaining people it can intimidate their opponents, break democratic resistance organisations, and thus cripple the voice of opposition. But history has proven time and time again that totalitarian methods cannot work forever. So long as the basic injustices of oppression and exploitation remain, resistance will continue. No matter how extreme the repression, others will always take the place of the detained, the maimed, the jailed and the dead.

In 1981 we thought the repression appalling. We pressured to get basic rights for detainees, we tried to win the rights to food parcels, to get rights of access for families, lawyers and independent doctors. We spoke out on torture.

We had no idea of the shocks the next few years would bring.

As the years unfolded we have witnessed a dramatic increase in repression. The numbers of detainees spiralled. We have witnessed the assassinations of Durban lawyer Griffiths Mxenge and later his wife Victoria. In the small but well-organised town of Cradock, Mathew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlauli disappeared one night. Their tortured and disfigured bodies were found days later. The list of the assassinated and disappeared inside the country is almost endless. So is the list of those assassinated patriots living in exile, but who remained within reach of the assassins' guns and letter bombs.

We have seen a growing movement - that of apartheid-supporting vigilantes. And we have seen with dismay the dramatic increase in army occupations of townships across the length and breadth of the country.

THE SECOND STATE OF EMERGENCY

On July 21st 1985 the second State of Emergency was declared in 36 magisterial districts. With it came a new and frightening phenomenon. More and more parents were coming to the D.P.S.C. offices to report the detention of their children. We realised that children, whom we consider to be people under 18, were becoming a major target of what everyone calls 'The System'.

I must note at this point that while I will talk about children, it is a very difficult term to define in our context. Certainly they are young people. But only in age. Emotionally, they are exposed to all the responsibilities and rigours of adult life from an early age. Politically, many show a wisdom way beyond their years. The children of South Africa are young, but not necessarily immature, innocent and carefree. I ask you to bear this in mind.

Looking back we noted that in 1982 8 juveniles were detained, in 1984 there were 9, all held under Internal Security Legislation.

But over the seven-and-a-half months of the State of Emergency in 1985 of the 8 000 people held 2 000 were under the age of 16 - the youngest 7 years old. Some were detained for the entire period of the Emergency, while others were held for a day. We heard a disturbing number of allegations of torture from these children.

Until this time D.P.S.C. had monitored so-called public violence cases, but it became impossible for us to continue as the number of public violence cases escalated to an incredible degree. The number of children charged with public violence, intimidation, arson and murder escalated beyond belief. There was no consideration taken of their age.

An example of this was the case of an 8 year old who was charged with 'intimidation' and refused bail. It was only after a public outcry that he was released into the custody of his parents. Later the charges were withdrawn. This child had been assaulted and is still psychologically scarred by this experience.

This example is not unusual. Many children spend days or even weeks in jail only to have the charges withdrawn.

The second State of Emergency ended in March 1986, seven and a half months after it was declared.

THE CURRENT STATE OF EMERGENCY

On June 12 this year the third State of Emergency was declared. This is the period I would like to focus on.

The Emergency is now five months old. This time it is country-wide. We estimate that 22 000 people have been detained so far compared to 11 000 during the last Emergency.

The shock estimate is that of this number 40 percent of detainees are children. The attack on children is ever increasing.

For this reason we are filled with foreboding for the future of the black children in South Africa. Constant and severe damage is being done to them. They are being subjected to traumas at a very tender age with which most people would find difficulty coping after adulthood.

There have been cases of infants one month old being forcibly separated from their detained mothers' breast. Others have been taken with the mother into detention. There was even one case of an infant being born in detention, and the mother had been in detention for over nine months!

Reports are received daily of children being taken into detention. Imagine yourselves as parents being woken by Security force members at night or in the early hours of the morning. They have come to take your child. You beg them to leave your child. They refuse. You ask them to allow you to pack a bag of clothes and toiletries. Chances are that they will refuse that as well. They leave, your child walking scared and bewildered between them, surrounded by guns and uniforms, getting an occasional push as they load your loved one into a police truck. You stand helpless, and watch.

As helplessly you may have stood and watched the security forces assaulting your son or daughter inside the house. Or you, too, may have been assaulted for saying something, or even saying nothing at all.

No doubt you will then try frantically to establish whether your child has been detained under Emergency regulations or Security legislation. You will try to find where your child is held. Such efforts mostly meet with a wall of silence from the authorities. The official statement that all next of kin will be notified is totally contradicted by the experience of the vast majority of families and the lawyers representing them, who without exception confirm the difficulties and obstacles encountered from the authorities in obtaining information.

You would, like most families, become frantic with worry as it is impossible to be sure if your child is safe or whether he has been abducted or even assassinated like you heard happened to someone else.

You would find it tough to take a food parcel, some money, a book or a change of clothes. It is as unlikely that you will be able to get a visit to your child, or even catch a glimpse of him. Most likely you will only see your child again once the police have finished their 'work' and your child is released.

Perhaps you are the parent and your child simply did not return home one day. There are untold numbers of children who are missing ... are they detained, are they dead or are they in hiding, too scared to return home in case the house is being watched?

One puts the blame for this crisis squarely on the shoulders of those in power. It is they who have implemented legislation that will allow for this state of affairs. It is they who are unwilling to publish the names of those detained. It is they who give the 'security forces' almost absolute powers. It is they who have imposed a near-total blackout on news from the townships. The system is one of total secrecy.

Or imagine that you are a young person, perhaps walking home from the shop or playing in the street. You are suddenly siezed by security force members.

You are thrown into a cell. If you are lucky it is a rather overcrowded cell of people your own age. If you are less lucky you are thrown into a cell along with adults, some of whom are hardened criminals. Perhaps they will leave you alone. Perhaps not...

You will in all likelihood get poor and insufficient food, no floor mats and insufficient blankets.

But you are more scared of the police who detained you. You remember the kicks and punches they probably gave you on the way to the cell.

You ask to see your parents. But the police just laugh and say you are not going to be seeing anyone except them for a while - you cannot see a lawyer, or a doctor of your choice, and certainly not your family.

But your trauma really begins when you are fetched from the cell to go for interrogation. You are locked into a room with men twice your size. They have total power over you, and they are surrounded by secret, deaf walls. They start asking you questions. You tell the truth. But they aren't satisfied with your answers and say you're lying. Then your terror really begins...

It is a fact that child detainees are not treated any differently from adult detainees. They have no rights to visits from parents, lawyers or independent doctors. Some report that they are held with adult detainees. Some are exposed to the harsh and brutal action of common law criminals. Even in this forum I find

it impossible to describe some of the things which have been done.

The situation worsens in the rural areas. At least in the cities there are lawyers and agencies to assist you to get what limited rights you have. At least in the cities the prison or jail is a train and bus ride away for your families.

Children are mainly held in communal cells. But solitary confinement is used as a technique for obtaining information that is wanted or to try to coerce the detainee to become an informer.

The last months we have seen more people than ever before who claim that enormous pressures are being exerted on them to become informers. It would seem that the police informer network has been broken down by resistance. The idea seems to be that if you scare people sufficiently, they will be prepared to inform. This strategy is often aimed at the less experienced and less politicised detainees.

A member of the Tumahole Youth Congress was arrested on the 12th June. He was detained at the Heilbron Police Station where he was beaten up and given electric shocks. Twice during the detention he was asked to become an informer. He refused.

From another statement it was alleged: 'Whenever people went for meals we were assaulted with batons. We were then told that anyone who was prepared to become an informer would no longer be assaulted.'

Many people claim that they are offered sums of money, tuition will be paid for and other bribes to win them over. Some claim that they are warned that if they refuse they will be held indefinitely or held for 180 days.

Violence is not the only method being used to recruit informers. Under the guidance of the secretive State Security Council they are using more devious methods to trap the youth into agreeing to work with them. It has recently leaked out that education camps are being established to try to 'win the hearts and minds' of the young.

Here they are promised education and an opportunity to learn skills. Some children have reported that they were tricked into going to the camps. They were told that they were being released from detention only to find themselves transported to a camp. Many have said that they refused to stay. They report that they are free to leave if they wish. I believe that the reason for this is that if the detainee shows the strength of character to resist remaining that in fact he is not a good subject for this brain washing technique and this is the reason for not forcing him to stay.

Reports have come in that the process is starting in prisons where detainees are divided into 3 categories. 'A' category are

leaders. 'B' category are the organisation and street committees representatives and the 'C' category are the ordinary people. It is the C category that is the target that they wish to win over. This category is not allowed to mix with the others. They are shown videos and allowed extra exercise time. Many ex-detainees have complained bitterly about this type of coercion.

There have been complaints about the medical treatment. Allegations are made that when a detainee asks for a doctor the request is often ignored. Detainees are supposed to be seen once a week but many people complain that they were not seen at all by a doctor.

There is great concern that the detained childrens' diet is inadequate. There is very little - if any - protein in the diet. Mealtimes are generally 8a.m. breakfast, 11a.m. lunch and the last meal of the day at 3p.m. Which means that children have to go without a meal for 17 hours.

During the last Emergency and more especially during this one, we have witnessed the security forces, which includes the Security Police, the uniformed police, the council police, the Railway police and the army, are acting almost indiscriminately against children. Among detainees are many children who are not involved organisationally. Out of 65 reports in Johannesburg, only ten children were identified as having organisational links.

Of the 65 a shocking 64 reported being assaulted to force them either to confess to 'crimes' that they had not committed or for the purposes of obtaining information.

Types of torture reported ranged from electric shocks to the more common assaults like kicking and hitting with either the butt of a rifle or with a sjambok (a plastic or leather whip).

Student leaders are singled out for more intensive attack. For example a student leader who was detained for three months claimed a hood was placed over his head and tied very tightly around his neck. His interrogators placed their hands over his mouth and nostrils making it very difficult for him to breathe. While he was being suffocated in this way, he was beaten all over his body. His genitals were pressed until they were swollen and bleeding.

An 18 year old who I saw I worry about a lot. He was held for the seven and a half months of the last emergency and was badly assaulted. A doctor who examined him thinks he may now have brain damage. He suffers continuously from blinding headaches and dizziness. He was due to go to a neuro-surgeon but was detained again in this emergency. The reason given for his detention is that he is a student leader.

I would like to spend some time relating evidence brought in a courtcase for the release of two children. This evidence was given by a 14 year old who was detained with his friends - one of

whom was only 12 years old. The statement was made while he was still in detention.

He said he and three friends went to the shops to buy food for a friend. On their return about 100 metres from the garage where the man works a police van pulled up. A policeman alighted and introduced himself as Tshabalala. Everyone was surprised at this. He then told them to climb into the van or they would be shot. Another policeman pointed his gun at them as they climbed into the van. They were then driven away.

In the van was another youth who was bleeding. His buttocks were sodden with blood and he was in considerable pain. He said he had been shot by the police when they arrested him. He simply shook his head when he was asked why he had been shot. He appeared to be in a state of shock.

The van stopped and a youth of about 20 got in. Blood was coming from a gash behind his ear. He said he had been hit with a gun by Tshabalala when he had arrested him in the house.

The detainee relates:

"Once again the van stopped and another youth climbed in. He also didn't know why he was arrested. When we arrived at the police station the seven of us were ushered into a room where there were two policemen. There was a chair, a bench and a table in the room. Other policemen came into the room. Our names and addresses were noted.

"Suddenly Tshabalala who now had a long hosepipe in his hand swung it and it struck me across my back. The pain and shock was so severe that I shouted. He continued to hit me and the others next to me. There was chaos as we all tried to avoid the pipe. I received a number of blows on my back and arm. I desperately tried to protect my head and face, not only from the hosepipe but also from the violence in the room as all of us were trying to avoid the hosepipe and the policemen would push us from one side of the room to the other. I do not remember how many policemen used the sjambok in the assault only that we were all sobbing and that there was a tremendous noise of laughter from the policemen and shouting, screaming and crying from us.

"The assault upon us continued intermittently with policemen coming and going. They shouted at us calling us trouble makers.

"After some time we were told to lie on our stomachs on the floor. They then kicked and stamped upon us with their shoes and boots. This carried on for a brief period with the boots of the policemen smashing into our legs, ribs and back.

"This came to a halt for me when one of the policemen stamped very hard with his boot on the back of my neck. as a result of which I felt a great shock. The room spun and then things went black.

"I was later told by my friends that I was unconscious for approximately five minutes. The policemen told some of the boys to carry me to the van. When I regained consciousness I was in the back of the van on the floor. I saw two others in the van with me. The boy who had been shot was still bleeding from his buttock and was in considerable pain. He had not received medical treatment when we had arrived at the police station. He hardly said a word but tears were in his eyes.

"The other boy was bleeding on the top part of his right eye and blood was flowing down the right side of his face. I was told we were being taken to hospital.

"We drove off and when we arrived at the hospital a black policeman got into the front of the van. His hand was bandaged. We were then driven back to the police station. None of us were taken into the hospital.

"When we arrived back at the police station Tshabalala told me I shouldn't worry because I would soon be going home. I was surprised that he said this as he had played the major role in arresting us.

"We were taken back to the same room. The others were sitting in the room. We were told to sit down. Victor - the boy who had been shot - lay on one side as he was in too much pain to sit properly. All the policemen left the room except for one.

"Later we were taken into another room where a policeman in blue uniform took down our names and addresses. There were also two women and one small boy in the room. One of the policemen asked the small boy who had been 'there' out of the seven of us. He pointed out the boy Victor saying that he was the only one who had been 'there' and that he had had a petrol bomb in his hand at the time. I did not know what they were talking about and to this day I still don't know.

"The two women pointed to the six of us and said we had not been 'there' and that we should be allowed to go home. I had never seen the women before. I deny any knowledge of an incident in which petrol bombs were involved.

"We were then led out of the room and put in a cell together. I sank to the floor feeling dizzy and still in a lot of pain. I had a severe headache and felt as if I wanted to be sick.

"At approximately 7 p.m. two policemen came into the cell. One of them carried a bunch of keys. The one had the green hosepipe. We immediately backed away from him in fear. They asked us for our names and wrote them down. He then began to lash out with his hosepipe and all of us ran wildly around the room as he started to shout at us and hit us.

"On one occasion I was hunched against the wall and he came up

and kicked me on the left side of my face. I felt a blinding pain shoot through the front part of my head and my nose started to bleed.

"The same policeman called my friend Moses who is 12 years old. He punched Moses hard in the stomach. Moses screamed very loudly and continuously for a time. When he stopped the policeman called him back. Moses very slowly walked towards him again. He was hunched and walking very slowly. He appeared to be petrified and there were tears rolling down his face when the same policeman kicked him hard in the stomach. Moses again fell to the floor screaming. The policeman stopped for a while and I think he thought he had seriously hurt Moses. However, when Moses became quiet he ordered all of us to stand up against the wall. He then went from person to person holding their heads with his hands and banged them twice or three times against the wall. When he did it to me the headache which I already had seemed to flash inside my head and the sick that I had been feeling in my stomach came up into my throat.

"While all this was taking place the policeman with the keys stood and watched and said nothing. During this assault no questions were asked of us, he merely shouted at us from time to time. He then told us to take our shoes off and stand against the wall. He then went from person to person and stamped on our feet with his boots. Although he didn't stamp very hard it was extremely painful. The worst part of it was waiting for your turn after seeing the person next to you shout out in pain as his feet were stamped upon. After this the two policemen left the cell.

"After approximately 30 minutes the two same policemen returned. The one called Victor and told him to go with them as they were going to hospital. At that point the other policeman called me. I was petrified as I knew that if I did not obey him he would come for me and it would be worse. When I stood in front of him he asked the other policeman for the cell keys. He then hit me behind the head twice with the keys. I moved back and felt the back of my head. There was blood. I can still feel the scar on my head. This blow was very painful as the keys were about three inches long. They then left the cell saying they would be back for us.

"We tried to get some sleep but the conditions in the cell were particularly bad: We each had a very thin mat to sleep on which was put on the floor and each had one blanket to either put on the mat or over ourselves. One blanket was insufficient to keep out the cold and supply enough warmth to sleep properly.

"Since our arrest and detention that afternoon we had received no food of any kind whatsoever and I was therefore hungry. We had only received water when we had been put in the cell as there was a tap in the cell which we were able to drink from. There was no toilet paper or any sort of paper which could be used when going to the toilet that was adjoining our cell. There was no hot water in the cells and no soap so we were unable to wash properly.

"I was feeling dizzy and had a headache which was so severe that each time it throbbed I felt as if my head would burst. My nose had stopped bleeding but it was very sensitive to the touch and very painful.

"The next day we awoke fairly early and received breakfast of yellow porridge. The rest of the day was uneventful except for our receiving the midday and evening meal which also consisted of porridge. This porridge was yellow in colour and of a texture similar to water. It tasted extremely bad and most of us experienced nausea after eating it. We received no milk, tea, sugar, meat or protein of any kind that day.

"During the course of the day I remember asking one of the policeman if we could be taken to hospital to have our wounds attended.

"The following day before breakfast we were all taken into another room in the police station which looked to me to be a type of charge office. We were asked to make a statement.

"The statement was written by various policemen concerned and although I could not see what was written down and it was not read to me afterwards I was told to sign it which I did.

"During the course of writing the statement a policeman came into the room and told us to stick out our hands. He hit us with a small chain across the knuckles and a small stick that appeared to be the handle of a broom. This was extremely painful but seemed to cause the police who were present much enjoyment and amusement. Afterwards we received the same yellow breakfast.

"At approximately midday I saw my mother. We were not allowed a very long visit. She merely gave us clothes and food and we returned our dirty clothes.

"We were not assaulted the rest of the day. We spent the night in the same cell and we all huddled together for warmth as it was cold. The food was the same three meals of porridge that we had received the day before.

"The next day the seven of us were taken to Protea police station (in Soweto). There a white man took a statement from me and although I did not see what he wrote and it was not read back to me I signed it.

"During the course of the day when we were being taken from the police station to the security police section I saw my mother standing near the gate. She was too far for me to say anything to her. I have not seen her since.

"As far as I can remember I saw a doctor on Tuesday at the Protea police station. When I saw this white doctor I told him I had been assaulted at the Orlando police station and he told me he

would write this down. I complained that my back was extremely sore as was my nose. He gave me cream for my right eye which had closed up. The doctor also gave me pills for the pain. They were round, yellow and had an 's' on them.

"On the Thursday I was called out of the cell and my photograph was taken by a police photographer.

"During the time I have been in Protea police station I have shared the cell with Moses who is 12 years old. He has daily complained of feeling dizzy and nauseous. He appears to be in a state of shock and very frequently breaks down crying.

"I have no idea why I was arrested nor why I am still detained. I have committed no illegal acts, nor have I been involved in any acts of unrest, and am completely bewildered as to why I have been assaulted by members of the South African police while I have been in their custody.

"The policemen who detained me could not have held the opinion that my detention was necessary for the maintenance of public order or the safety of the public or my own safety, or for the termination of the State of Emergency."

That is the sad story of just two out of thousands of children detainees. It is perhaps a particularly brutal example. But we hear stories similar to this every day.

What is also notable from the affidavit is that the youngster was forced to sign a statement which he did not read, let alone write. Confessions are often reported to be forced from people, even when they did not have any involvement in anything. I believe that this serves the purpose of the police who, in response to the 'charge or release' call being made locally and internationally, are getting trumped up charges against detainees. In this way the police can turn around and say: 'O.K. we have charged the detainees, as you asked'.

These children have little chance: they are taken into detention where confessions are often forced out of them. They are then dragged in front of magistrates who often refuse bail on the grounds that these children will 'participate in boycotts' if they are let free. Boycotts are not illegal, but are rather undesirable for the government. Excessive sentences are often handed down. Most of the charges, however, cannot be made to stick even in the racist courts.

The point really is this: that the call to charge or release does not take into account the fact that the laws under which people are charged are themselves fundamentally undemocratic, racist and draconian. They are laws passed in parliament or by Presidential Decree, where the majority of people have no say. They are laws passed by the minority to protect the minority. They are laws which try to turn any and all forms of political opposition into criminal activity. There are laws against 'terrorists' and not

freedom fighters, against 'intimidators' and not activists, against 'public violence' and not legitimate defence from police attack.

In addition, the charge or release call assumes that the courts will deal with the cases impartially. But this is not the case. At a magistrates court level, the bias of the courts against the accused is obviously transparent.

Even at a Supreme court level it has been shown that about 15 percent of the judges hear 80 percent of the political cases. This minority of judges is white, male, elderly and almost always exceptionally conservative politically.

So the detention system acts against children, as do the laws and the court system. Blacks are disadvantaged at every point, and the charging of children under this system is as serious a violation of the children as the detentions themselves.

The extracting of confessions also serves another purpose: when the prosecutor stands up in court and points to a young black, nearly always males, he can show to the press and the public a living example of what the government claims: that "it is the radical youth who throw petrol bombs and stones and walk around in mobs who are the cause of the problems in South Africa today." Through extracting confessions they try put the blame for our ills on young black boys who are portrayed as unreasonable, radical criminals. In this way black children are dubbed as klipgoeiers or stonethrowers, and in an instant the state's guilt for violence against children is washed away.

The charges also give the impression to the white public that everything is under control, that the government knows who (rather than what) is responsible for the present problems, and is dealing with them.

What the courts and the press seldom reveal are the cases where the police arrive to detain a member of the family and when they find he is not there they take someone else. In one extreme case they took the entire family as 'hostages'. This included a one month old, and five, six, 11 and fifteen year old children.

Again one can imagine the anguish this causes the child in hiding. Running from the Security Police, the child watches as his or her family is attacked, harassed, threatened and intimidated. And all because the family protects the child's whereabouts. One young man sought by the police gave himself up after his family was continually harassed. He had been in hiding for three months. A member of the family told us: "He was tired of hiding and confident he had done nothing wrong. He gave himself up."

This young person, Thomas Mahlangu, was shot in cold blood outside his parents house after he had given himself up without a struggle. A newspaper published the account of an eyewitness to

the shooting. The report said: "She saw Thomas Mahlangu turn and face the house with his hands in the air as if he were going to be searched. Then she saw one of the policemen shoot him in the back. There was no sign of a struggle before hand and she said Thomas was clearly not attempting to run."

Disturbing as well is the number of shootings involved during the process of detention. The greater proportion of children shot were between the ages of 14 and 18 years. There are reports of children shot in the yard of their homes or while walking in the street on an errand to the shops for their mother.

Many of the children have been shot at funerals and vigils, and some in the grounds of their schools. But, instead of the police being charged, the shooting victims are almost always charged with public violence. The police logic goes something like this: the police are there to protect 'law and order'. The police can use force to do it, but only where necessary. The police only use force on guilty people. Therefore anyone who has been shot must be guilty of the 'crimes' they are trying to combat. Therefore the people who are shot should be charged with those crimes.

So it is most often the victims, rather than the police who end up being charged with breaking one or another law.

The police leave no stone unturned in their search for the 'guilty' youth. Following on the logic that they only shoot people who must be guilty, the police have for some time been systematically searching the hospitals for gunshot or teargas victims.

Today most wounded people fear going to hospital for treatment as people suffering from gunshot wounds are reported to the police. During the last emergency a new trend showed itself: if you are wounded you get a friend to give you an operation, and not a doctor. The pain suffered is tremendous - but nothing what it would be if a doctor reported you to the police and they got hold of you. Then and now, our D.P.S.C. offices often look like casualty centers. Children come in bleeding, some with the bullets still in them. Others have got buckshot wounds, or at least the knife scars from where the buckshot was taken out. Others have broken arms and limbs.

In response to this unbelievable situation, crisis care groups are being established. Care groups are springing up in many townships under the guidance of local community organisations and detainee support organisations. Basic first aid courses are taught to volunteers from youth, student, women and civic organisations. It reflects the state of our country, that those courses are not about basic first aid for diseases, but first aid for gunshot wounds, tearsmoke asphyxiation, how to set broken bones, and how to counsel ex-detainees.

INFORMAL REPRESSION

Running parallel with security force repression is a nation-wide pattern of attacks and arson by private 'armies', rightwing vigilante groups and mysterious hit squads. Their targets are leaders and activists of anti-apartheid organisations.

Their tactics vary from creating an environment of repression, by widespread and unrelenting violence, to the elimination of key organisations and key activists. A thorny question is the degree of support that vigilantes and hit squads receive from the security forces. In courts and newspapers around the country there have been repeated allegations that security forces have either participated on the side of the vigilantes or that they simply stood by and allowed the vigilantes free reign. The security forces have denied complicity each time such allegations have been lodged despite the overwhelming evidence.

The authorities depict the struggle in the townships as "Black on Black" violence. This implies that this is particularly savage and inexplicable violence between "brothers" (whites, they stop short of saying, would never fight one another like that) and that it is bloodshed for which the regime is free from blame.

What is not revealed is that this violence is generally between pro-apartheid and anti-apartheid forces.

Vigilante violence is either manufactured to disorganise and shatter resistance to race rule; or else it flourishes in the cracks and divisions which apartheid itself has created amongst the voteless majority.

An example of this vigilante action occurred in 1985 when a group employed by the unpopular, government-imposed councillors in a small town, called Welkom, emerged to "scourge the township of rowdyism" and to protect the councillors. Quoting the dictum 'spare the rod and spoil the child', one councillor said the vigilantes used only sjamboks, but used them 'energetically'.

So energetically were sjamboks used that 17 year old Daniel Mabenyane died in hospital four days after being flogged. The gang also shot dead two 15 year old boys. Hundreds more, mostly youths, were abducted from their homes, flogged at the administration board office, attacked on the street with knives, pangas, machets and other weapons. Some were maimed for life.

For instance, after being shot by vigilantes Daniel Mabenyane was handed over to the police. He was kept several days at the police station before being given medical care. Daniel's father says: "I found Daniel lying on the floor of the police station charge office. A blanket covered him. I pulled off the blanket. His body was covered in wounds. He could not speak. He was trembling." He died a few days later.

Due to the poor quality of evidence at the inquest nobody was blamed for Daniel's death. But the judge singled out the police for particular censure.

Another case was that of a 15 year old student leader a few weeks ago. After midnight there was a knock on the door and people claimed that they were police. The family opened the door and many men in plain clothes came into the house. Two of them had guns. They asked for their 15 year old son by name they then took him out to the cars and drove off.

Just as they were leaving a police van came up the road. An elder brother ran to the van and asked the policeman to follow them as they had taken his brother and they were very anxious for his safety. The policeman went after them and returned shortly afterwards saying that the men had a note with permission from the police to take the boy. The next day the family went to the police station. He was not there. They eventually found their son in a mortuary. He had been shot and stabbed to death.

These are reports we receive but one of the worries is - how many don't we know about?

Under the emergency regulations the security forces enjoy an indemnity. The effect of this is that the security forces quite clearly believe that they will, except in a few cases, get away with anything. They have been given the right to detain or arrest anyone if they think it necessary. These wide powers can only lead to a lack of accountability which brings about a state of lawlessness.

We are not aware of half the abuses due to the fact that the police and the Department of Information control all information flow. Access to so-called unrest areas is disallowed for the press, which is heavily restricted in reporting security force action. In addition the commercial press is very nervous of moving too far into legal grey areas in case they overstep what the government considers to be the line. As such there is very often self-censorship.

Secondly, legal services are limited and curtailed in what they are able to do under the emergency regulations. Thirdly, some people are too scared or ignorant of their rights to go for help. Where cases have gone to court for the release of a detainee the police often advise the court that they have information from persons they cannot name, that the detainee is involved in organising school boycotts, or is active in street committees.

None of the allegations are open to question as all the arresting police force member has to show is that he has a belief that is it necessary for that person to be detained. Often the allegations bear little resemblance to the truth, but are simply after the fact justifications for the detentions. In any event, activities the government regards as criminal - such as organising street committees, student and consumer boycotts and

so on - are regarded as legitimate and necessary forms of democratic opposition by most. The state, however, is determined to criminalise political opposition.

For children the protection of the Children Act consists mainly of words as worthless as the paper they are written on. According to the laws, the Internal Security Act and the Public Safety Act supercede the Children's Act, as well as many other laws. Thus children are treated exactly as adults when detained.

In September 1985 there were mass arrests at schools where the security forces moved in and detained entire student bodies. One such case was a school in Soweto where 1 200 were taken and only released after an urgent action was brought to the Supreme Court.

In this situation the children in South Africa not only find themselves on trial in courts across the country, but in prisons without trial, facing ever increasing brutality from the security forces that patrol the streets of the townships and the corridors of the prisons. What is quite clear is that the few protections available to stop the abuses are not adequate.

It is not possible to ascertain the number of children who have been tried for politically related activity in South Africa over the last decade. The majority are charged with "public violence" and the state and the courts treat the offence on a par with any routine criminal charge.

The extremes the police go to in laying these charges against children is incredible. On June 16th 9 children playing soccer kicked the ball into the street and ran after it. These children, aged 11 and 16, suddenly found themselves surrounded by members of the security forces, were arrested and charged with public violence. After several postponements and a full day trial all of them were acquitted.

There are thousands of children facing criminal charges which include murder, intimidation, public violence, assault. It is the army and the police perpetrating the violence, but it is the children who are paying the price of violence by being further assaulted, shot, hospitalised, detained, and charged with public violence. No wonder, then, that increasing numbers of youth are fighting back with any means at their disposal.

Children are often brought to court without warning either to their parents or their legal representative. Neither the Court nor the police are obliged in terms of South African law to advise the parents of a minor that the child is to appear in court. The law simply requires that they inform them if possible. Sentences of children in these instances range from anything from a short sentence to years imprisonment.

THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

It is true to say that many young people emerge strengthened despite the trauma of detention, torture and township unrest. But, for many, the major psychological effects of violence on children are two-fold: it causes depression and it causes anxiety.

Some of the effects which are included in depression are the following:

- * There is a sense of impotence because of the lack of control over the simplest aspects of life.
- * There is a sense of meaninglessness: where the detainee speaks of the pointlessness and emptiness of their lives and has little hope for the future.
- * There is a loss of self-esteem: many children describe the interrogation process as being protracted and a vicious attack on their persons. They are denigrated by their interrogators.
- * Many talk of suicide, but our counselling service reports that none of the ex-detainees they have counselled have attempted suicide.
- * There is psychic numbing: Young people in this state seem wooden, listless, unable or unwilling to interact with others. I remember sitting and talking to a young fifteen year old. He had the softest, angelic face. But it was expressionless. As we sat there, I talked and asked some questions. He did not reply. He seemed so immobilized by his detention and torture experience that he sat silent and motionless. The tears that ran down his cheeks were the only sign of pain.

For people who reach this stage of psychic numbing, the healing effects of action and decision making seem beyond their capabilities. Their recovery is slow, and only experienced professionals can really help. It is sad that we can now report that we have more and more of these experienced people. Our violent society has provided many cases to treat.

CONCLUSION

I have spoken at length, and in some detail about the effects of physical violence on South Africa's black children today. But I would like to remind all of you that police violence is not the only violence which children experience under Apartheid.

Apartheid is a violent system from top to bottom.

Think of the migrant labour system which provides cheap black labour for the mines and factories. Millions of black children only see their fathers once a year for a few weeks. Many who live in the townships bid farewell to their mothers and fathers who leave for work as early as 4 in the morning and return only after dark.

The destruction of family life is politically, legally and economically institutionalised under Apartheid. This is psychologically and socially damaging to both parents and

children.

Think, too, of the child labour. Although it is illegal to employ any child under the age of 16 thousands of children in the rural areas work on farms for food rations. They are employed because they are even cheaper than their parents. In the city, on any street corner, you can see children as young as eight or nine working as street vendors for pitiful pay.

Think of township life. It is bleak and tough. Unemployment has been estimated at 56 percent of the economically active population in Soweto. In the Eastern Cape the figure is higher. The poverty in the townships is overwhelming. The inadequate food is responsible for the high incidence of Tuberculosis. The housing shortage is chronic. There are few, if any, social and sporting facilities.

Due to the extensive unemployment and retrenchment it is very difficult to meet the commitments of rent, transport and food costs. Most black children are always hungry. Thousands are malnourished. In some areas in Ciskei, 5 out of ten children will die before they reach the age of one - for lack of food, and because of nutrition related diseases.

Now with the advent of the present crisis a situation of civil war exists in the townships. Troops patrol the streets, many children have gone into hiding, parents are detained and sometimes both the mother and father have been detained. In some families all the children are detained. One woman I know has 4 children in detention ranging from 11 years upwards.

The anxiety of living in this environment causes tremendous stress. The parents of missing children are angry and resentful of the present system. They go backwards and forwards to police stations, hospitals and mortuaries looking for their loved ones. Relief when they do find their son or daughter in detention because at least they then know what has happened to them.

The economic drain on them is also enormous. There are transport costs and some even lose their jobs. One woman told me that she had worked for one employer for 10 years. When the employer found out her daughter was detained she was fired on the spot because the employer said "if she had a daughter mixed up in that sort of thing she did not want her." The employer never thought to ask the woman why the daughter was detained.

But, while the terrible effects of apartheid must be remembered so must this: millions of children and parents have joined together as members of mass resistance organisations. They are united in their struggle against apartheid. There is a sense of strength, dignity and purpose.

The long term effects of living through the horrors of violence, repression, detentions and general civil war are as yet merely

speculations.

But what we do know is this: that a generation of angry, militant and politicised youth has been bred. The youth of 1986 have their counterparts in the factories and townships: the youth of 1976.

Built on the foundations laid by previous generations of activists, a powerful and indestructible progressive political force has been built in South Africa. Change is coming, and of that there can be no doubt. Our hope is that the change will come swiftly and certainly, and that on the ashes of apartheid we can erect a society free from exploitation and oppression, free from racism and institutionalised violence.

Together millions of South Africans are working to this goal. The sooner it comes, the sooner we can begin reconstructing our lives and healing our wounds - and the wounds of our children. We will do it not just for ourselves, not just for the sake of humanity.

We will do it for our children. And for our childrens' children.

As we say in South Africa:

AMANDLA! POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Thank You