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PIETERMARITZBURG CRISIS C()-()RDINA'IA\200\230IN{} COMMITTEE

The Pietermaritzburg Crisis Co-ordinating committee is an ad hoc grouping of a broad range of

representative organizations in the Pietermaritzburg region. These include the following:
Churches

Cosatu

Democratic Party

Ethos

Federal Theological Seminary

Five Freedoms Forum

Lawyers for Human Rights

IDASA '

Imbali Support Group

Joint Academic Staff Association of the University of Natal

Midlands Democratic Womenâ\200\231s Organization

Natal Indian Congress

Muslim Relief Agency

Combined Ratepayers Association

Northdale Ratepayers Association

National Union of South African Students

National Medical and Dental Association

National Education Crisis Committee

Pietemtaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awaxeness

Pietennan'tzburg Council of Churches

Pieterman'tzburg Democratic Association

St J osephâ\200\231s Scholasticate

,â\200\230BUnited Democratic Front

The committee was formed on the morning of Thursday 29 March once the full dimensions of the

crisis facing Pietermaritzburg became apparent.

The crisis committee has met daily since then and has set up a number of working groups. These

are:

- Monitoring

- Police

- Relief and Refugees

- Press and publicity

- Missing persons and body identification

- Funerals

- Legal

â\200\224 Medical and health

MONITORING

A twenty four hour monitoring service has been set up in central Pietermaritzburg. The

Democratic Party has provided office facilities and their telephones and the Centre for Adult

Education of the University of Natal provided computers and computer programmes.

Calls received from people in the affected communities are immediately cross checked with reliable informants in the areas and then, where necessary the police and/or the SADF are approached to provide protection. Where possible monitors are sent out to areas to observe and in some cases to take wounded people to hospitals. All calls are carefully documented. Over 200 incidents of violence have been recorded by the monitoring group since Thursday 10 am. Of these 195 were attacks or actions by Inkatha or police on non-Inkatha supporters. Some of the calls have come from Inkatha members warning that Inkatha militants were about to attack. The death toll in the attacks since Sunday 25th is at least 85. A consistent feature in many of these incidents has been the seemingly partisan behaviour of the police, in particular the kitskonstabels. The monitoring group also found that when police were contacted by the monitoring office the reaction by the police was exceedingly slow, often extending to delays of several hours. A clear example of this was the attack on the house in which three members of the Irnballi Support Group were besieged, shot at, and their motor car riddled with bullets and the car destroyed with petrol bombs. The monitoring group has also found that the SADF have not been effectively deployed by the police. Again the Irnballi Support Group incident is apposite. A ten vehicle group of SADF troops waited fruitlessly for their police escort to arrive on the evening of these attacks in Imbali. The monitoring group has also experienced difficulty obtaining details of the dead contained in government morgues. Partly as a result of such complaints about the police force the delegation was mandated to meet senior police officers on Monday 2 April.

POLICE GROUP

The police group of the crisis committee comprises representatives from the monitoring group, churches, Cosatu, women's organizations, a legal person and the Democratic Party. On Monday afternoon the delegation met with 8 senior police officers, including Brigadier du Toit, Colonel Vorster and representatives from the Riot Unit. The delegation explained the work of the Monitoring Group and registered its dismay at the slow (or nil) reaction to calls put through to the police to take action in cases of confirmed incidents of violence. The police representatives promised to inform their men about the monitoring group although they were unwilling to provide a "hot-line" telephone number to a senior person in case of difficulties. A further complaint was made about the many allegations of partisan behaviour by police. The police demanded that documented evidence of this be produced. They claimed that they were impartial. The police admitted that they had been unable to protect a number of areas where people had been killed, houses destroyed and property and livestock looted. This they ascribed to being undermanned and staffed with inexperienced policemen (who, for example could not distinguish between refugees fleeing with their goods and looters stealing them). The police representatives were unwilling to discuss the deployment of the SADF in the townships and said that such decisions were made at a higher level. They were also unwilling to discuss the way the existing troops in the area were used, saying that this would reveal their strategy. The issue of the delays in the removal of bodies, particularly in the case of the KwaMnyandu and

KwaShange areas was raised.

The Crisis Committee was very concerned that dislocated people might not be able to trace where their dead relatives were before they were given paupers funerals and buried by the State. The police said that because of the large number of dead, mortuaries as far afield as Pine town had had to be used. They agreed that they would allow bodies to remain in mortuaries for an average of 14 days. They were unwilling to allow the distribution of photographs of the dead to the refugee camps to enable relatives to identify the dead. They were persuaded to agree to have a set of such photographs at the Plessislaer Police Station.

RELIEF AND REFUGEES

From Tuesday 27 March refugees began to stream into Edendale. Most of these come from the devastated areas of KwaShange and KwaMnyandu where the full weight of the Inkatha assault was unleashed. Thousands of other refugees came from neighbouring EziBomvini. They ended up into the nearest part of the Edendale Valley, Esigodeni, where they were congregated in churches and church halls. Most of them arrived with little more than the clothes they were wearing. Refugees also came from Caluza, the part of Edendale that bore the brunt of attacks by a force of between 2 and 3 thousand warriors from Tuesday onwards. Others refugees from a renewed assault at Table Mountain joined those at the camp at Masons Mill. By the weekend there were an estimated 14 thousand refugees crammed into limited space. Providing food, bedding, sanitation, and basic medical help has proved a major undertaking. The Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches has provided staff and a depot for the supply of resources to the refugee camps. The refugees were very disturbed by the looting of their houses and property and by reports of their livestock being driven off by the attackers. The refugees want to try to collect whatever of their property remains. They are insistent that they require an army and not a police escort to do so. The rebuilding/resettling of these thousands of people requires massive resources and members of the relief and refugee group have engaged in negotiations with a number of bodies about this.