PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY ’CONCERNED SOCIAL WORKERS’

A group of Concerned Social Workers have organised a conference focussing on ’children under repression’ to be her at the University of the Witwatersrand, on the 25th and the 26th October, 1985. The conference is oeing organised to draw pubTic attention to thevioTation of children’s rights in our communities, particulariy under the present state of emergency.

We are concerned about the effects of children’s exposure to and experience of violence in the townships. We believe that such exposure can never be conducive to the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and-social development of children.

We further believe that professionals in the social services such as doctors, Tawyers, social workers, psychoTogists and teachers need to face this issue. We cannot remain silent whiTst the rights of children are being violated.

Based on the information at our disposal, we are convinced that the present experiences of children under repression, contravene the UN DecTaration of the Rights of the Chde, which sets out internationaTTy accepted standards for the humane and dignified treatment of children.

Over the past month, 6 chderen between the ages of two years and ten years have died as a result of police or South African Defence Force action. 0f the totaT number of people arrested and detained since the declaration of the state of emergency, well over 1 050 have been reported to be chderen beTow the ages of fourteen years. The South African CathoTic Bishops’ Conference Report on Police Conduct during Township Protests, August - November 1984, contains aTTegations of rape and abuse of children.

A Child Welfare Social Worker and the Detainees Parents Support Committee have records of chiidren who have been reported missing. Parents are frantic about the whereabouts of their chderen. Other forms of violence inciude the whipping of children by the Defence Force in an attempt to force them out oftheir homes and into classrooms.

Many children have been physicaTTy injured and treated by township doctors for the adverse effects of rubber bullets, teargas and baton charges. Others,have experienced severe psychoiogical probTems due to their exposure to and experience of various forms of violence.

The information that we have is still sparse. It relies mainly on testimonies from parents, chderen and professionals working with such persons. Parents are reluctant to expose their chderen by reporting them as missing, injured or detained for fear of re: crimination from authorities. The result has been that many cases are unreported.

We hope that this conference wiTT be abTe to draw together parents, professionaTs, community and social service organisations to examine the issue more cioseTy. The fatai shooting of Hector Peterson in Soweto 1976, of 3 year old Mita Ngobeni of Attcridgevilkeand 10 year old Hilton Stuurman in Cape Town recently, are the tragic symboTs of the vioTation of chderen’s rights in our country.

E. Testimonies

t The Johannesburg Chi1d WeTfare Society appointed a deputation to approach the Government Minister on the issue of chi1dren in detention. The director of the agency, Mr Howard Ferreira said the effect of imprisonment on young chi1dren cou1d have a terrib1y warping effect.

(The Star, 21 August 1985)

t ProfessionaTs - doctors, socia1 workers, psycho1ogists and psychiatrists passed the fo11owing reso1ution at a meeting he1d on 14 September 1985.

"We express our deep1y fe1t horror and revu1sion at the State's assau1t on chi1dren and ca11 upon the Government to re1ease a11 the detained chi1dren immediate1y into the custody of their parents or guardians (and) put an immediate end to the security forces harassment ahd detention of chi1dren. Chi1dren are particu1ar1y susceptib1e to the deve1opment of Tong - term adverse effects of these bruta1ising experiences - such as anxiety disorders, adjustment and behaviour disorder and even psychotic episodes."

t Human Rights Lawyer Mr Nicho1as Haysom said that South Africa departed significantTy from internationa1 standards in it's imprisonment of chi1dren. "Internationa1 Codes, he said, embody an a1most preemptory requirement that chi1dren shou1d not be he1d in the same prison as adu1ts. Whi1e South African 1aw comp1ies with this and stipu1ates that chi1dren shou1d not be kept injai1 at a11 un1ess no other institution existed these ru1es are honoured more in the breach than the observance."

(The Star, 17 September 1985)

t The Star editoria1 condemned the vio1ence against chi1dren saying, "The case of an 11 year 01d chi1d who was kept in prison for 57 days is at 1ast before the courts... He a11eged1y threw stones... It took a Supreme Court ru1ing to get him out of jai1 ... He was kept in po1ice ce11s to protect society from his inf1uence and to ensure he did not f1ee justice...

What sort of madness is this?"

(The Star, 17 September 1985)

C
D. Report on ’Police Conduct during Township protests’ August - November 1984.
Compiled by the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference.
t Indiscriminate and excessive beating
"The description of random shooting of township residents is paralied by the aliegations concerning widespread assaults perpetrated against residents by the poiice.
The most savage exampie of this conduct is the incident involving Miss MN, a standard 3 pupii from Soweto. While she was walking home, a hippo passed her and a policeman told her to board the truck and he would buy her sweets. When she refused, another policeman pointed a smaii gun at her and ordered her on to the hippo. Inside the hippo she was told that the children in uniforms were the ones who caused the troubie. They sjambokked her and she screamed. One poiiceman then put his hand over her mouth and two other policemen continued to sjambok her for some time. Thereafter they told her to get out and go home.
A medicai practitioner at the Oriando Clinic examined her the foilowing day and found the foliowing injuries: 8 weais on her 1eft thigh; 3 weals on her left buttock; 14 weals on her left forearm; 5 weais on her left chest; 12 weals on her right forearm and 7 weals on her right thigh. The beating was a1$o found to have caused internai bleeding." (page 10)
t Other A11egations
"On November 21, 2 girls of 15 and 16 were aliegediy raped by two white policemenin a poiice hippo. Whiie returning from the shops, they were ordered into a hippo in Sharpviiie at about 4pm and kept inside untii approximateiy 6.30am the next morning." (page 27)
t Statement by Dr. Y.Veriava
"I have treated peopie from Sebokeng and Lenasia who have suffered from injuries during the unrest in these areas. Two of these coilapsed as a result of teargas. One child whom I saw after inhalation required mouth to mouth resuscitation as a resuit of the teargas."
"I know of one child whose skull was fractured by a rubber buiiet and who died of meningitis as a result. I treated a child who was shot on the right side of the head by a rubber buiiet. He is suffering from weakness of the 1eft arm and is confused. His brain has been damaged and he has become forgetful."
"The police have also used reai builets. I have treated two patients who were shot in the back. One of these, a 15 year old boy, was shot in the back of the sku11 in September and the builet is stiii logded in his brain. He has suffered brain damage and is now menta11y abnormai."

INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

A. Reported incidents of the vio1ation of chi1dren’s rights

746 pupi1s arrested at Soweto’s H1engiwe Secondary Schoo1.
Major Zwane, po1ice 1iason officer for Soweto, confirmed that the chi1dren were detained on the Thursday at their White City Jabavu schoo1. Many of the chi1dren were as young as 12 years of age.
(The Star, 12 September 1985)

A teacher and 10 pupiTs were shot at Musi High Schoo1 after po1ice used shotguns and rubber bu11ets.
(The Star, 13 September 1985)

173 peop1e arrested inc1uding 13 chi1dren under the age of 14 years, at A1exandra Sinton High Schoo1 in Be1gravia, Ath1one.
(The Star, 18 September 1985)

About 87 of the 104 Thuto - ke - Mat1a pupi1s in Tembisa who were arrested at Mahwe1ereng, Potgitersrust on Saturday, 14 September,have been re1eased.
(The Star, 19 September 1985)

A 3 year 01d, Phi11ip Dh1amini was shot in the 1eg at his home in Zo1a.
(City Press, 29 September 1985)

. Figures on the number of chi1dren arrested, detained and missing wi11 be re1eased at the conference by members of the Detainees Parents’ Support Committee and Child Ne1fare Soc1ety.

. Deaths as a resu1t of po1ice and SADF action in the Townships

A 3 year 01d Mita Ngobeni was fata11y shot with a rubber bu11et by po1ice whi1e p1aying in heryard with two cousins.
(City Press, 15 September 1985)

13 year 01d Ester Mantwa was shot on her way from schoo1, It is a11eged that pupi1s hadbeen ordered to 1eave the schoo1 premiseS by members of the SADF.
(The Star, 17 September 1985)

A 16 year 01d Diepk1oof pupi1 died after he was a11eged1y shot by po1ice.
(The Star, 17 September 1985)

10 year 01d Hi1ton Stuurman was shot in Cape Town.
(The Star, 30 September 1985)

An unidentified gir1, aged about14 years was ki11ed by shotgun fire at Nyanga station.
(The Star, 17 October 1985)

Three youths were shot dead by po1ice on Tuesday in Thornton Road, Ath1one.
(The Star, 17 October 1985)