

GND 068/0078/33  
Democratic Front and a founder member of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), explained recently that 'the South African Freedom Charter can never die because it expresses the hopes and heartaches of the people'. Since she spoke, a considerable victory has been won by the resistance movement inside the country, because the regime has been forced by mass pressure to lift the banning of the Freedom Charter.

The victory came on 30 January this year, when the South African Publications Appeal Board decided that it would not in future be illegal to possess a copy of the Freedom Charter. The argument which convinced them was that the Freedom Charter could not be described as belonging exclusively to the African National Congress, itself a banned organisation.

This argument won the day with the Appeal Board because of the steady growth in popularity and outspokenness of organisations inside South Africa based squarely on the Freedom Charter's proposals. The first publicly to declare themselves firmly 'charterist' were the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Release Mandela Committee, in the early 1980s.

The formation of the United Democratic Front last year (it now has over 600 anti-apartheid organisational affiliates) has shown how the ideas of the Freedom Charter have become part and parcel of mass opposition to the regime inside the country.

The Freedom Charter was adopted by more than 3,000 delegates at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, South Africa, in 1955. Commenting on its recent unbanning, the African National Congress said that the important point about the decision was that 'it is the mass acceptance of the Charter, despite the previous prohibition, which has forced the regime to concede defeat'.

Helen Joseph was at the Kliptown

“ The African National Congress, the broad democratic movement and the people of South Africa as a whole, will be observing 1984 as the **Year of the Women**.

We shall do this not merely to pay tribute to the embattled but struggling womenfolk of our country and to honour their historic achievements, such as the founding of the South African Women's Federation on April 17th, 1954. We have thus dedicated the coming year as confirmation of the resolve of the South African national liberation movement to see the women of our motherland play their rightful role in the forefront of the struggle for the destruction of the monstrous system of apartheid and the creation of a peaceful, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

The liberation of the land of our birth and of all its people will materialise as a genuinely popular victory on the basis of the involvement of the masses, including the women in their millions, as a conscious and active part of the anti-racist and anti-colonial democratic movement of South Africa. One of the fundamental tasks that this

process of national liberation confronts is the liberation of the women of our country from their triple oppression on the grounds of sex, class and colour.

The African National Congress is convinced that the struggle in South Africa and its assured victory constitute an important component in the universal offensive for a peaceful world whose human and material resources should serve to enhance life in all its parts, whether spiritual or material.

For these reasons, we issue this call to the international democratic women's movement and to the freedom loving peoples of the world to join us in marking 1984 as South Africa's **Year of the Women**, in pursuit of the common goals that we all espouse.

Together we shall win! ”

Oliver Tambo  
President of the African National Congress  
1 November 1983

## Showing our solidarity in Britain

**YEAR OF THE WOMEN 1984 has been declared by the African National Congress of South Africa, but it is also intended to express solidarity with the women and people of Namibia, the front line states and the rest of Southern Africa**

One immediate thing that activists can do is send greetings to Dorothy Nyembe, South Africa's longest-serving woman political prisoner (15 years) and due for release in March 1984. Cards and letters should be sent c/o her daughter, Mrs Beatrice Mhlongo, F579 Ntuzuma Township, PO Kwa Mashu, Natal 4360, South Africa.

Another case which illustrates the harassment of the South African women's movement particularly clearly

is that of Albertina Sisulu. She was sentenced to four years' imprisonment (two suspended) in February this year, on charges of furthering the aims of the African National Congress. Albertina Sisulu is one of three national presidents of the United Democratic Front and a veteran anti-apartheid fighter who has endured years of banning and restriction. Aged 65, she is also president of the Women's Federation of South Africa. Her husband Walter Sisulu is serving life imprisonment together with Nelson Mandela.

In Namibia, dozens of women captured by South African troops from refugee camps in Angola nearly six years ago are still being held in detention without charge in southern Namibia. A new campaign for the release of the Kassinga detainees, one

third of whom are believed to be women, is being launched by Southern Africa-The Imprisoned Society (SATIS) and the Namibia Support Committee.

The convenor of the ANC Year of the Women Committee, Agnes Msimang, has appealed to the international solidarity movement to organise a range of other activities to promote the Year of the Women, including:

- seminars, teach-ins, workshops, conferences, films, rallies and other educational events to highlight the situation of women under apartheid
- producing and distributing information about the South African women's struggle — a new slide show is available from the ANC Women's Section in London, for example, which should be useful

the demand  
The banning of atomic and hydro bombs  
The use of the atom for peaceful purposes and the betterment of world  
That there shall be no more war  
That there shall be peace and freedom for our children.

Extracts from 'What We Demand', compiled by the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) for the Congress of the People. The Freedom Charter incorporated these and ideas and objectives from groups over South Africa. FEDSAW, which commemorates its 30th anniversary on 17 April this year, played a major role in uniting women during the 1950s and continues to be held in regard to

- increased international support for the democratic women's movement of South Africa
- increased international support for the programme and projects of the ANC Women's Section
- organising to draw greater numbers of women into the struggle for the total isolation of apartheid in Africa.

Special events being arranged for the Year of the Women include speaker tours by representatives of the ANC Women's Section and SWAPO Women's Council. On 17 April the ANC Women's Section is taking part in a 'Women Challenge Racism' conference being organised as part of the GLC's Anti-Racist Year. For further details on our activities and resources contact Longbottom at AAM HQ.

Congress of the People 26 June 1955