

## END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

### POLICY ON CONSCRIPTION IN A POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

#### PREAMBLE

The End Conscription Campaign rejects racially-based conscription as part of a broader strategy of militarisation. We believe that this system has resulted in racial polarisation and serious damage to the social fabric of our society. Furthermore, we believe that in a post-apartheid South Africa the coercion and force that has characterised our nation in the past must be done away with. Thus, we believe that conscription, both military and non-military, should not exist.

#### ECC POLICY

It is the ECC's policy that military conscription should not form the basis of the personnel procurement policy of the defence force in a post-apartheid South Africa for the following reasons:

- 1) Military conscription is a violation of the individual's right to choose how he or she defines "service" to his or her country.
- 2) Military conscription results in a serious misuse of manpower, results in the wasting of time and low productivity, and is inefficient as a means of ensuring adequate troop levels or at directing skills where they are needed most.
- 3) While recognising that there may be a need for nation building, particularly among the youth, the ECC believes very firmly that military conscription is an inappropriate vehicle for such a program. Instead, we believe that opportunities should be made available for those who wish to volunteer for military or non-military service.
- 4) South Africa has no need for a large defence force requiring universal conscription. The vast number of conscripts resulting from such a system would place an intolerable burden on state resources, without contributing to the upliftment of disadvantaged communities. While a ballot system could be used to control the numbers of conscripts, such a system nevertheless would require a vast bureaucracy to monitor potential and actual conscripts, and is, in a sense, the worst of both worlds.
- 5) The ECC believes that the effects of racial polarisation in our country will not disappear overnight, and that there will continue to be groups and individuals who resist conscription, for various reasons. Thus, we believe that conscription remains a recipe for ongoing polarisation and conflict, even if carried out on a non-racial basis.

The ECC further believes that a system of non-military conscription is undesirable and should not be introduced. Many of the above objections to military conscription apply equally to non-military conscription. In addition, the portion of the population potentially available for non-military conscription is huge, and could amount to several hundred thousand individuals per annum. Clearly, it is impracticable to introduce a "nation building" program involving so many people. On the other hand, we doubt that it would be possible to find an equitable basis for selectively conscripting people into such a program. Thus, we believe that such a system would simply place great pressure on the State's resources, and would be too large and clumsy for the effective implementation of development programs.

In the event of a democratically elected future government deciding that military conscription should be re-introduced, the ECC believes that the right of individuals to object to military service on grounds of conscience must be recognised. In such a scenario, we believe that conscientious objectors should be offered non-military service on request, on an entirely non-punitive basis, with the option of service in non-governmental bodies. This right should be entrenched in a Bill of Rights.

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