

ECC POLICY UPDATE !

We have recently been updating our policy on various issues. Two draft policies have been prepared and circulated to our branches. One is a program to end conscription and a view on military policy in a post apartheid South Africa. We have reproduced it in full. The second is a much longer document on SADF deployment in Black townships, and we have printed a summary.

ECC has never had positions on possible methods of abolishing conscription and on what an appropriate defence force for a new South Africa might be. However developments over the past months have necessitated us looking at these issues. The other draft arises out of the conflict in Natal. In desperation some communities have called for the deployment of the SADF instead of police in their townships. This has happened and we had to develop a position on it.

Both drafts will be discussed at our national conference at the end of May and official policies should be agreed upon. If so copies of the full text of the policy statements will then be available from our national office (Box 537 Kengray 2100) or from your local ECC branch.

SUMMARY OF DRAFT POLICY ON THE SADF IN TOWNSHIPS

ECC has always opposed the use of soldiers in townships. The draft does not change this basic position. Instead it notes the high levels of violence in Natal and affirms our belief that peacekeeping should be a police function. However the SAP has failed, other measures are required and in the short term the SADF is the only available one.

The draft policy defines the SADF's role as being strictly limited to :

- "1) Maintaining a neutral presence to monitor and promote peace between competing groups.
- 2) Maintaining independence vis-a-vis other security forces operating in the area.
- 3) Exercising maximum restraint in the use of force."

To try ensure that the SADF acts in accordance with these the draft policy recommends "that the SADF should endeavour to facilitate the monitoring of its role by independent bodies". Media access to the area is included. It suggests the establishment of an independent monitoring committee and proposes a composition for the committee. The draft then proposes that this committee also conduct enquiries into incidents where civilians and/or soldiers are killed.

The following code of conduct is proposed :

- "1) Minimum force should be used at all times. To make this possible soldiers should be armed and equipped appropriately for a peacekeeping/crowd control role, they should be trained in crowd control before being employed in such functions, and they should be provided with appropriate personal protective equipment, such as shields and helmets.

- 2) Strict control should be exercised over possible provocative behaviour of soldiers.
- 3) Soldiers should be identifiable as SADF members and should be personally identifiable.
- 4) SADF units should act in a strictly neutral way.
- 5) SADF units should include persons fluent in any local languages.
- 6) The code of conduct should be publicised and all soldiers deployed in a peacekeeping role should know and understand it."

The draft policy recognises that some conscripts may have sincere objections to this kind of duty and so says "conscripts should be granted non-punitive exemption from such duty on application".

Given that the SADF has very little experience in peacekeeping, the draft suggests using the experience of armies that have participated in United Nations peacekeeping forces - either through them training those SADF members involved and/or by the SADF using their methods.

Then it suggests a few things that could be done in the longer term to more effectively control urban violence. Finally it calls for a judicial commission of enquiry with the following terms of reference to be appointed :

- "1) Establishing all the causes of the conflict.
- 2) Making recommendations on reducing/eliminating the conflict.
- 3) Making recommendations on addressing the grievances of the affected communities.

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