

## LETTER TO THE STATE PRESIDENT

A24.7.4

His Excellency  
Mr P.W. Botha  
State President of the  
Republic of South Africa  
Private Bag X83  
PRETORIA  
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22 August 1986

Sir,

During the days since the declaration of the State of Emergency on 12th June 1986 it seems that large numbers of people who have worked for an end to military conscription in South Africa have been detained. The SACC have supported the End Conscription Campaign since its inception, we wish to state once more that compulsory conscription to military services is a violation of the individual conscience.

In the Christian faith conscience is seen as an essential part of a person's religion. It is the faculty of mind and spirit which enables one to perceive the difference between right and wrong. All the uses of the word conscience (suneidesis) in the New Testament indicate the role conscience is seen as playing in the life of religious people and in their obedience to God.

Even where people are taken to be outside the true religion of Israel, the Bible still recognises that their conscience, as a God-given faculty, guides them as to what is right and wrong (e.g. Romans 2: 14-15). So even those who profess to be atheistic have this God-installed perception and are under its compulsion. It is not something they merely invented, and even though people (including Christians) can smother their conscience, this does not mean that conscience is under their control to change it to will.

If we believe that God speaks also to those who do not acknowledge his existence, then we must respect the human conscience as we respect the voice of God.

In the matter of military conscription in South Africa it is therefore the duty of those whose consciences lead them to believe that compulsory military service is wrong to work to persuade the government to end the system.

We have no intention of "inciting the public or any person or category of persons to . . . discredit or undermine the system of compulsory military service" but we ourselves have a duty in conscience to restate our views in this regard to you and to the public.

We are opposed to compulsory military conscription in South Africa and will continue to work for its repeal.

The State of Emergency regulations promulgated on 12th June 1986 are in all respects a fundamental denial of the Christian gospel. We would remind you, Sir, of your own words on 31st January 1986 when you affirmed your

government's faith in sovereignty of law as the basis for the protection of fundamental rights. You said that peace, freedom and democracy could not exist without law and that any future system had to conform to the requirements of civilised legal order and to ensure access to the Courts.

We call upon you, Sir, to act in accordance with your statement. A refusal to act thus will justifiably be interpreted as a denial on your part of the sovereignty of the rule of law.

We call upon you to lift the State of Emergency, to release all whom your government is holding in detention without access to the Courts and to repeal all legislation which allows such detention in this country.

Yours sincerely,  
C.F.B. NAUDE  
General Secretary

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**END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)**

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