

AJ 37

Descom

Johannesburg

19 March 1984

file "AJ 37"

Dear Friend,

The different Detainees support groups on the Witwatersrand recently held a workshop at which they discussed the changing nature of government repression and the effects this was having on progressive organisations. In the course of discussion the following points were made:

1. Since 1981 the government was using a number of new ways to intimidate members of progressive organisations, for example call-in cards, house raids, spy-rumours, alleged beatings of activists, unidentified attacks on activists, their cars and homes, threats to activists and family members, banning of meetings, preventing organisations from getting venues to hold meetings and road blocks.
2. The security police were making more use of the courts to try activists for minor offences in an attempt to 'criminalise' their activities. The courts were handing down very heavy sentences for minor offences.
3. The security police were using section 50 of the criminal procedure act to detain activists in an attempt to hide the fact that these people were in fact political detainees.

In the past Descom had concentrated mainly on assisting the families of detainees in different communities and publicising detentions by means of pamphlets, posters and public meetings. While Descom members had discussed the governments new tactics on many occasions, they had not taken steps to work out a strategy to deal with these tactics. Participants in the discussion felt strongly that this strategy could only be worked out in co-operation with the organisations affected by these government tactics.

The workshop therefore decided to discuss the following questions with other progressive organisations:

1. Has your organisation been affected by any of the tactics listed above?
2. What affect has this had on your organisation and your membership?
3. What have you done about this?
4. In what way do you think Descom could assist your organisation to deal with these problems?
5. Do you think that any changes need to be made to the way in which Descom is structured in order that it can work more closely with other organisations on this issue?

Please can you discuss these questions with your organisation. A member of Descom will contact you to discuss this further.

Yours in struggle,

Descom

Descom

Johannesburg

19 March 1984

file "A 537"

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