

DA 179

Not published DETENTIONS

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The Editor,  
The Star.

Sir,

I despair for our people and our country.

I am filled with a sense of helpless outrage at the latest atrocity which has surfaced - the physical and mental state in which Mr. Thozamile Gqweta, a young, healthy and highly respected trade unionist, was admitted to the psychiatric ward of the General Hospital, after several months in detention.

This follows almost immediately after the tragic death in detention of another young, healthy, highly respected trade unionist - Dr. Neil Aggett.

What is it that these fine young men are supposed to have done that they should be subjected to treatment which is not meted out even to the worst criminals, who have been tried and found guilty in a Court of Law?

They have not been charged. They have not been tried, even under the rigorous and unjust plethora of laws which presently deface the Statute Book. They are apparently not "innocent until proved guilty", despite Mr. Pik Botha, but neither are they guilty even in the eyes of the authorities, who are unable to lay any charges against them. Why do they act in this horrific fashion, *and what is to be done about it?*

The only thing that is perfectly obvious is that the public, and Parliament with it, are to be kept in total ignorance of why people are arbitrarily detained, of what goes on behind their cell doors, or even of why numbers of them are just as summarily released after undergoing months of mental torture, and possibly physical abuse as well. For this they have no redress, and from it they have no protection.

What of the much-vaunted sovereignty of Parliament? How much water does this concept hold when Ministers refuse to answer questions in Parliament and discussion is vetoed on a "sub judice" claim on a matter which is being openly discussed outside Parliament?

The Government itself is making a nonsense of the government.

There is a growing communication gap between the Executive and the Legislature.

The Judiciary has long since had its underpinnings knocked away.

There is no-one/.....

There is no-one, but absolutely no-one, to whom the man or woman in the street can appeal when a sense of justice is outraged; or when people are subjected to patently cruel and inhuman treatment; or when they are offered no protection whatsoever from the mighty powers of the state; or when that power is so obviously being abused.

It is no use at all pleading with the authorities themselves. They are their own judges. They believe what they choose to believe, and discount everything else, and there is no way of proving misgivings because the authorities are the only witnesses.

Nor do they even seem to care. When a member of Parliament can affirm that people cannot be in solitary confinement if they are being interrogated, and if many of his colleagues can find this amusing, despite the obvious evidence that all is far from well, what is there left for ordinary, decent people to hang on to?

This is indeed a very sick society. One can only hope that the illness is not terminal and there there is still time to inject a little of the milk of human kindness to reverse the tide of the disease.

JOYCE HARRIS.  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT.  
THE BLACK SASH.

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**DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989**

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