



UNITED NATIONS CENTRE AGAINST *APARTHEID*

November 1983

THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA and KILLINGS AND REPRESSION IN "CISKEI"

Statement by H. E. Mr. Uddhav Deo Bhatt (Nepal), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, at the meeting of the Committee on November 8, 1983

As you know, the new constitution of South Africa was approved in a referendum of white voters in South Africa last week.

The Special Committee has already issued a statement on this new constitution, but we must reiterate our position in view of the misleading propaganda by the apartheid regime and its friends.

The new constitution of South Africa is nothing less than an outrage against the oppressed people of South Africa, against the continent of Africa, and against the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Last week's referendum on that constitution, like the referendum on the republic in 1961, was a racist referendum limited to white voters, and can have no legitimacy whatsoever.

The apartheid regime is boasting that the new constitution was approved by almost a two-thirds majority, but that majority is two-thirds of fifteen percent of the population.

The constitution is based on and entrenches racism. It provides for three houses of Parliament on racial issues. The population will need to be divided on racial lines for the elections. The whites will continue to dominate the Parliament and the Government. The Coloured and Indian houses will have only limited jurisdiction. In fact, they are invited to help implement racist laws.

The African people, who comprise seventy per cent of the population, are totally excluded from the political process. The constitution is, in fact, a further manoeuvre to deprive the African majority of its citizenship rights.

The constitution does not represent a "step in the right direction" or any evolutionary change towards equality, but a streamlining of apartheid and racist

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domination. It does not reflect any willingness on the part of the apartheid regime to move towards equality, but an effort to entice the Coloured and Indian people to co-operate with it against the African people.

The constitution has been opposed not only by the African people but also by the Coloured and Indian people who refuse to become tools of the apartheid regime.

The Coloured and Indian people have for many decades struggled together with the African people against apartheid and have always recognized that the interests of the African majority must be paramount. Many of their best sons and daughters have sacrificed their lives in the struggle and suffered imprisonment and persecution. Their unity with the African people has been further reinforced in opposition to the constitution. The apartheid regime found it necessary to ban all meetings against the constitution.

The new constitution is a prescription for further conflict. Its implementation will be opposed not only by the African people - but by the Coloured and Indian people who will now become subject to conscription in the racist armed forces.

The United Nations has repeatedly made it clear that a just and lasting solution in South Africa can only be based on total elimination of apartheid, the release of all political prisoners, the dismantlement of bantustans, universal suffrage in the country as a whole, and majority rule.

While reiterating its position, the United Nations and the international community must not only denounce the new constitution but also consider effective action to assist the oppressed people in their resistance against the imposition of the new constitution.

Reign of terror in "Ciskei"

I must also draw the urgent attention of the Special Committee to alarming reports concerning the brutal and widespread killings and repression in the bantustan of Ciskei which was granted, in 1981, so-called "Independence" which has been denounced by the United Nations and all Member States.

The unpopular authorities foisted on the Ciskei have resorted to ever-increasing repression against the people and the trade unions.

In the middle of this year, African workers who live in the Ciskei but work in the neighbouring township in so-called "white South Africa" began a boycott of buses in protest against a fare increase. To crush the boycott, the Ciskei police, aided by the army and vigilantes of the ruling party, assaulted, beat and arrested people who used private cars, taxis and trains instead of buses. They even resorted to shooting. It is reported that about 90 people were killed and many more were wounded in the incidents and clashes connected with the bus boycott. Scores of people were detained and tortured at a sports stadium in Mdantsane and one woman was raped. Among the detainees were a boy of 14 and a girl of 11 years of age.

The authorities have also escalated repression against the black trade unions. They banned the South African Allied Workers' Union with 30,000 members, and arrested its entire executive except for the President who is in hiding.

Repression was also extended to students. In September, when students at Fort Hare University commemorated the anniversary of the killing of Steve Biko, police attacked them and arrested 45 students.

It is reported that over the past few months, more than one thousand people have been detained in Ciskei, including about 20 members of SAAWU, many other trade unionists, students, churchmen, journalists, lawyers and physicians.

As recently as 30 October last, Ciskei police detained Reverend Smongaliso Mkhathshwa, secretary-general of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The repression has only increased the resistance of the people against the authorities. Recent attacks by ANC against Ciskei's so-called consulates in Pretoria and Johannesburg, as well as the recent petrol bomb attacks on the homes of known supporters of President-for-life Mr. Lennox Sebe, are illustrative.

On behalf of the Special Committee, I would like to appeal to all governments and organizations to take all appropriate action to end the reign of terror in the Ciskei. We must make it clear that we hold the Pretoria regime responsible for the gruesome events in the Ciskei.

The Special Committee will continue to follow the situation and take appropriate action.

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