



CHILDREN IN CRISIS

PACSA FACTSHEET

CHILDREN IN THE FOREFRONT

"For 350 years white rule in South Africa has condemned successive generations of black children to an existence of servitude. Since 1976 children have risen in revolt, children have declared - with their bodies as well as their lips - 'We would rather die on our feet than live on our knees.'"

Mary Burton, National President, Black Sash.

TORTURE AND DETENTION OF CHILDREN

Since the State of Emergency was imposed in areas of South Africa in July 1985, more than 2 000 children under 16 have been detained without trial. Many have been denied contact with their parents. Numerous reports were received by Amnesty International that young emergency detainees were being beaten and electric shocked. Many were subjected to corporal punishment and/or solitary confinement, according to reports.

On 14 September 1985 a meeting of social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists in Johannesburg condemned the harassment and detention of children. Children, they said, are particularly susceptible to long-term effects from traumatic stress - anxiety, depression and behavioural problems... Attorney Nicholas Haysom told the conference: "One of the more awful memories I have is of children screaming through the night."

Two cases:

Eugene Vusi Dlamini aged 16 years, of KwaMashu, Durban, was detained on 27 August 1985, with other student leaders, and held under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act. He was allegedly beaten unconscious at KwaMashu police station, and then taken to C R Swart Square,



where he was assaulted by six white police officers. He was kicked and punched, blindfolded and tied to a chair, had water poured over him and was electric-shocked. He received no medical attention, and was later made to stand against a wall for two hours, then blindfolded and electric-shocked until he vomited. He was left unattended in his cell until 3 September when he was again beaten and shocked. He was then taken to hospital, from where he phoned his mother and told her he was deaf in one ear, had a broken jawbone and suspected fractured skull and forearms. On 6 September his family was granted an interim interdict to restrain the police from assaulting him. Medical and psychiatric reports were brought before the courts on 19 September. The police denied he was assaulted. On 15 October he was charged with public violence, found not guilty and released.

Fanie Kuduka, 11 years old, a Std 2 pupil, spent 57 days in jail. On 11 July he was arrested in Alexandra, charged with public violence and remanded in custody. He was refused bail twice. His story is: "One day my teacher told us to hurry home from school ...When I reached 13th Street the rain came down hard. I ran into an old shed. Then I saw a soldier. I wanted to run but I had been told the police shoot you if you run away, so I stood still. The soldier said I threw stones and burned buses, and a Mercedes Benz. He made me go with him in a Hippo to Wynberg police station. I told them I did nothing. They said they would hit me until I told the truth. They beat me and kicked me." He goes on to describe his stay in John Vorster Square in a cell with 13 'grown up' men, the large prison uniform he had to wear, and the behaviour of some of the men. Mrs Kuduka finally got her son out on bail. In January 1986 he went to court and was found not guilty. He is now recovering from his ordeal, supported by his loving mother.



SECURITY POWERS

Although the State of Emergency has been lifted, the police have wide powers, and these will be even wider if the following bills go through parliament. Juveniles are not exempt. Security legislation already violates the spirit & intention of the Childrens Act.

Two Bills before Parliament :

The Public Safety Amendment Bill gives the Minister of Law and Order unlimited power to declare an 'unrest area' for three months without permission of parliament. No court of law can challenge this. Police and army can then - stop all news coverage; detain and arrest people without a warrant or any obligation to release their names; declare curfews; search without a warrant and confiscate any article; act with indemnity from prosecution.

The Internal Security Bill provides for detention under a new clause, Section 50 a, which will allow the police to detain anyone for 180 days without trial. This detention will need only the ratification of a policeman of above the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

DEATHS OF CHILDREN

Children and young people have comprised a substantial proportion of those killed in police action. Since July 1985, 209 have been killed. A Cape Town Medical Report states that half the people in that area shot last year were shot in the back. Of all the victims, 12% were under the age of fifteen, and the youngest was aged seven.

VIGILANTES

Young people are particularly vulnerable when it comes to vigilantes. Those who have been attacked by right wing vigilante groups say that it is useless to report the attack to the police. Many schoolchildren throughout the country are in hiding in fear of their lives. Others have fled South Africa. A whole generation of children is caught up in violence and counter violence; and some take justice into their own hands.

Schoolchildren in the townships around Pietermaritzburg have to contend with frequent police and Inkatha presence in their schools. Young people who support organisations other than Inkatha consider themselves in grave danger. The following condensed report is from 'Echo', a supplement for African readers which appears in the Natal Witness.

Nkosinathi Michael Mkhize, aged 18, was forcibly removed from his home on 6 May, during the night, by a hostile group of heavily armed men. His mutilated body was found next morning. His mother said she wept when the men took her son away with them. 'I had a feeling that I would no longer see my child' she told the ECHO reporter. She was right. ('Nathi had been a supporter of the United Democratic Front).

CONCERN

Women, in particular, are concerned about what is happening to our children. On October 26 1985, 22 women, black and white, stood with linked hands outside the Moroka police station. They made the following statement :

This is a non-violent appeal

We come in peace

We are here in solidarity with women
in the townships

We believe that the sons of Africa
should not fight one another -
black and white youth are being brutalised
by the conflict in our society, a conflict
born of the apartheid system

The harassment, assault and detention of
children must stop

The army must be withdrawn from
the townships

The police should not be above the law
& must be accountable for their actions

The State of Emergency must end

We are here in peace, love and hope