

A broad range of media representatives have rallied around the embattled 'alternative press', determined to resist government attempts to define and restrict the role of the media in South Africa.

standing together in defence of the right to differ

mignonne breier

South Africa's 'alternative Press' - born to articulate concerns generally ignored by the 'mainstream' media - is fighting for its life.

Its workers have been harassed, detained, even injured. *New Nation* and *South* have been closed temporarily in terms of the Government's latest media regulations and others, including *Weekly Mail* and *Grassroots*, have been warned their turn might be next.

But in Cape Town, representatives of publications ranging from the threatened 'fringe' to glossy *Cosmopolitan* and *Femina*, have united to oppose the clampdown and have resolved to campaign for freedom for all sectors of the media.

About 200 delegates and observers, including members of the Black Sash, attended the launching conference of the 'Save the Press' campaign held at the University of Cape Town.

Throughout the conference there was an empty chair at the front table, marked 'Zwelakhe Sisulu', a poignant tribute to the editor of *New Nation* who is in his 19th month of detention.

Numerous examples of harassment were related.

* Mr Patrick Nyuka, of the Oudtshoorn community newspaper, *Saamstaan*, said he had been shot - 13 pellets in the back and 10 in the hand - during an incident involving 'kitskonstabels' (special constables).

According to the March issue of *Saamstaan*, available at the conference, the incident took place last year following a welcoming party for two members of the Bhongolethu Youth Organisation who had been released from prison.

Mr Nyuka was going to fetch more film for his camera when he was confronted by three 'kitskonstabels'. They wanted to take his camera, the report stated, and he refused. A confrontation developed. He got away and ran to the nearest house. He was ordered to come back and did so. A second constable moved in behind him and shot him, the report said.

Mr Nyuka said he was hospitalised for three weeks after the incident, then arrested and charged with various alleged offences, including public violence. The charges were later withdrawn.

* Mr M J Fuzile of *Veritas*, a King Williams Town news agency, said he was detained on 14 June 1986 under the Emergency regulations. He was not given any reasons, and only learned much later that he had been detained because of his plans to put out a community newsletter for the area.

'The idea in itself was enough for 17 months' detention,' Mr Fuzile told the conference. He was released on 10 November 1987.

* Mrs Rashieda Parker, of Allie's Printing Services, the Cape Town printing firm that often does work for community organisations, told of repeated harassment and questioning of staff by 'agents of the state'.

She said her husband, who had been detained several times, had been treated at Valkenberg psychiatric hospital for depression during his previous spell in detention. He could not attend the conference as he was resting, but sent a message in which he vowed to continue to print 'even if we have to pay the ultimate price'.



The conference was also told about:

- * A warning in Parliament, by the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, that he would not condone women's magazines questioning conscription.
- * A move by the Department of Education and Culture to stop the distribution of the children's magazine, *Molo Songololo*, at certain schools.
- * Harassment of the Lenasia newspaper, the *Indicator*, by the tax authorities.
- * The Post Office's closure of UCT radio.

Mrs Jane Raphaely, editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* and *Femina*, said she had been 'bounced off' the Media Council for 'expressing views I was not put there to express.'

Professor Jakes Gerwel, Rector of the University of the Western Cape, urged the media to unite and find ways to resist the 'culture of silence' being imposed by the Government.

He said the press in South Africa was ideologically and politically diverse. It was essential to defend the right to hold different opinions.

Mr Harald Pakendorff, former editor of *Die Vaderland*, said the Government's actions against the alternative press set a bad example for the future when there could be a situation in which 'South represents the commercial press and *Die Burger* the alternative media'.

Delegates to the conference unanimously adopted a declaration rejecting the Government's attempts 'to define and restrict the role of the media in South Africa' and demanding freedom for the media.

They resolved further to support the 'Save the Press' campaign which would be spearheaded by the media but taken also to the community at large. They also called for the unbanning of the restricted media and the release of detained journalists and other detainees.

A committee consisting of Professor Hermann Giliomee, Editor of *Die Suid Afrikaan*, Mr Moegsien Williams, media officer of the University of the Western Cape and Mr Mansoor Jaffer of *Grassroots*, was elected to co-ordinate the campaign. □



**WORK IN
PROGRESS**

South
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SAAMSTAAN

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December 1987 GRATIS

THE New NATION
WEEKLY MAIL
THE PAPER FOR A CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA VOLUME 4, NUMBER 17 THURSDAY MAY 5 to THURSDAY MAY 12, 1988

NON - PROFIT COMMUNITY NEWS

grassroots
THE PAPER ABOUT YOU Vol. 9 No. 3 May 1988

The mastheads shown here do not represent all the newspapers and magazines that have been officially warned. The remaining three are *New Era*, *Azania Focus* and *Die Stem*.