

# ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE

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**Although the national anti-apartheid conference was banned, the first steps in building an anti-apartheid alliance to oppose the racist regime have been taken. PHAMBILI reviews the motivations for holding a conference of all anti-apartheid forces.**

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IN May 1987 the National Working Committee Conference of the UDF adopted, amongst others, a resolution on the need for a "national conference of all anti-apartheid forces in order to determine the shortest possible path to peace." This year, on 14 to 15 May, a similar resolution was passed at the Cosatu Special Conference to call a conference of a broad range of anti-apartheid organisations to deliberate on repression and action against it.

## **Reasons for the conference**

A motivating document for the conference, said that in our country today there is more and more polarisation between the apartheid forces on the one hand and the democratic forces on the other.

"While many and different structures are involved in the fight against and defence of apartheid, the two main protagonists in this conflict are clearly the ANC and the government."

Referring to the mass democratic movement, the motivating document said that there are many other organisations in the country who share with the ANC a vision of a unitary, non-racial South Africa. These organisations, organised mainly under the UDF and COSATU, use open and legal ways to fight apartheid. "Their combined membership runs into a conservative estimate of five

million people".

But while more and more organisations were adopting the Freedom Charter and joining the mass democratic movement, "we still have a significant number of organisations that have not yet joined" while opposed to apartheid.

"Many of these groups espouse liberalism (in different ways) and are in most cases not antagonistic to the mass democratic movement. It is this group (in the townships) which is seen by the government as a moderate block which should be won over to the side of apartheid. This group consists of small businesspeople, taxi associations, teachers, sportsbodies and other professional structures. It is also this group which has become the interest of imperialist forces, particularly the USA."

Pointing out that the state had targetted the UDF and COSATU among the legal organisations for repressive attention, the document said that UDF and COSATU, as organisations of the people, should seek support from the people. "The question is how?"

The document said firstly UDF and COSATU should continue to deepen and strengthen their grassroots structures so that "to wipe us off will mean exterminating the whole population". Secondly "we should deny apartheid forces any chances of gaining more junior partners amongst our people." The anti apartheid conference offered an opportunity to win over in a disciplined and systematic way groups which are seen to be on the middle ground.

### **On the United Front**

The document said there was no ambiguity from the UDF and COSATU resolutions about the need for a broad conference of anti-apartheid forces. The understanding of the UDF and COSATU was that the people of this country already had a united front in the form of the UDF, and the "broadening and strengthening of our united front becomes an urgent task". Quoting from the 1987 UDF Working Committee report, the document said that the friendship and co-operation between Cosatu and the Front had grown into "a true fighting alliance". The task now was to build the united front at a local level: "in which sectors are represented, especially workers, youth, women, students and civics".

### **The Process towards the conference**

Suggesting that the conference should be before the October municipal elections, the paper said that there should be open and

frank discussion of the two themes, the anti repression campaign and working for one-person one vote in a united democratic South Africa. "Areas of difference should be frankly discussed, but more emphasis should be on areas of common agreement and ways and means explored of how to forge permanent co-operation between the mass democratic movement and other formations outside it."

In a separate paper on the themes of the anti-apartheid conference, the organisers said the challenge facing the democratic movement was to identify the key elements of the total onslaught unleashed by the state against the masses of South Africa, namely all round repression and co-option in different forms and to chart the way forward for the mass democratic movement.

### **The Anti-repression Campaign**

The paper on the themes said that the oppressed masses, together with white democrats, had moved from mere protest to an open challenge of the racist regime. "The regime has been unsettled by the emergence of mass democratic opposition to apartheid, united and organised in such structures as the UDF and COSATU at national and regional level, by the civic associations, the youth congresses and street and block committees at local level. This movement, representing people from all sections of the South African population, has posed a clear democratic alternative, and a great threat to apartheid, and has left the regime, already suffering a crisis of legitimacy all over the world, with only one option: repressive rule."

The paper outlined various forms of repression such as the outlawing and criminalisation of mass democratic opposition to apartheid such as the bannings of the ANC, UDF and restrictions on COSATU as well as the prosecution of thousands of activists supporting legal organisations. Other forms of repression included arbitrary arrest and detention; brutal attacks and killings of opponents of apartheid; vigilante attacks and apartheid death squads; forced removals and resettlement, and hangings.

The paper said the repressive strategy of the state is aimed at crushing by force all opposition to apartheid in order to create an open field in which apartheid may be re-instituted under the guise of reform.

"The forthcoming municipal elections form part of this strategy; it is hoped that the state will shift the balance of forces in its favour

by winning more junior partners to implement its policy. To prevent the losses it suffered during the introduction of the Black Local Authorities and the tricameral elections, the state has seen fit to crush all opposition by banning the UDF and other democratic organisations, gagging the press, detaining and restricting community leaders, tightening up the Group Areas Act and outlawing extra-parliamentary boycott action against the October elections. Added to this are the restrictions on COSATU and the new Labour Bill, which takes away the democratic right to strike and curtails collective bargaining in the labour sphere."

The peaceful three day stayaway, said the paper, had shaken the state sufficiently to consider amendments to the bill and this proved "the need and power of united action against repression".

### **One Person One Vote in a democratic South Africa**

The paper said that it was a universally accepted principle that all adults should have the right to vote for the government of their country and that the will of the majority should prevail. South Africa was not a democratic country. The right to vote was decided on a racial basis, and then it was exercised in racial compartments such as the bantustans and the tricameral parliament.

The municipal elections in October would not change this fact, although by holding them on the same day the government wants to pretend to the world that all South Africans have the equal right to vote. The oppressed majority is expected to vote for municipal policies in the makings of which they have no part, said the paper, "in short we are being asked to help the government further to undermine our democratic rights".

### **How can we work for a democratic South Africa?**

The paper said to chart a realistic way forward we should take the prevailing material conditions, and not assume a uniformity of grievances and political consciousness in the communities.

The municipal elections provided an opportunity for a concerted campaign to expand the moral influence of the mass democratic movement, and to build alliances with all groupings to the left of the Nats.

By isolating the Nats, by distinguishing them from the majority that truly offers an alternative to apartheid, we shall be creating the best climate for a peacefully negotiated settlement based on our minimum conditions.

**PARTIAL LIST OF ORGANISATIONS BEING  
ASKED TO ATTEND**

**SECTORS**

**GROUPINGS**

1. Labour
    - 1.1. Cosatu
    - 1.2. Nactu
    - 1.3. Unaffiliated unions
  
  2. Students
    - 2.1. Sansco
    - 2.2. Nusas
    - 2.3. Sasco
    - 2.4. Inter-church/ Interdenominational student organisations
    - 2.5. White school organisations
  
  3. Youth
    - 3.1. Sayco
    - 3.2. Inter-church/ Interdenominational youth organisations
  
  4. Women
    - 4.1. Feddraw
    - 4.2. NOW
    - 4.3. UWCO
    - 4.4. Eastern Cape women
    - 4.5. Border women
    - 4.6. Orange Free State women
    - 4.7. Black Sash
    - 4.8. Women for Peace
    - 4.9. Black Housewives League
    - 4.10 Interdenominational Women's groups
    - 4.11. Other
  
  5. Unemployed
    - 5.1. NUWCC
  
  6. Professional
    - 6.1. BMF
    - 6.2. Namda
    - 6.3. Nadel
    - 6.4. Teachers
    - 6.5. ADJ
    - 6.6. Oassa
    - 6.7. Udusa
    - 6.8. Sabswa
    - 6.9. HWA
    - 6.10 Traditional Healers Association
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**7. Political 7.1. UDF**

**7.2. ECC**

**7.3. FFF**

**7.4. NDM**

**7.5. Inyandza**

**7.6. DPP**

**7.7. Seopa Sengoe**

**7.8. PPP**

**7.9. NECC**

**7.10. RMC**

**7.11. Contralesa**

**7.12. Nopeco**

**7.13. National Forum**

**8. Sports and culture 8.1. Sacos**

**8.2. NSL**

**8.3. NPSL**

**8.4. SAFTA**

**8.5. Cosaw**

**8.6. SASF**

**8.7. SANA**

**9. Religious 9.1. SACC**

**9.2. SACBC**

**9.3. AICSA**

**9.4. Idamasa**

**9.5. Call of Islam**

**9.6. ZCC**

**9.7. Rastafari**

**10. Civic 10.1. Regional representatives**

**11. Business 11.1. Nafcoc**

**11.2. Sabta**

**11.3. Other taxi associations**

**11.4. Taverners associations**

**11.5. Hawkers associations**

**12. Institutions 12.1. Idasa**

**12.2. ICT**

**12.3. Sached**