

# SUPPORT THE

## AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

by **Dr. BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR.**

After my recent tour of Southern Africa as part of a leadership delegation from the United Church of Christ, I have come to one firm conclusion: the most effective means of supporting the people of South Africa in the struggle to dismantle apartheid is to give all possible, direct support to the African National Congress (ANC).

On April 16, 1988 in Lusaka, Zambia I had the pleasure of taking part in an historic meeting between the leadership of the African National Congress and national leaders of my church. The ANC delegation was composed of members of their National Executive Committee, including Pallo Jordan, Thabo Mbeki, Ruth Mompati and Jacob Zuma. The ANC's Religious Affairs Department was also there, including Chaplain Gqiba. The atmosphere was permeated by a sense of mutual respect and solidarity. What became clear to our delegation was the profound love which the ANC continues to have for the people of South Africa.

**Candid and in-depth discussions**  
We met for an entire day in candid and in-depth discussions concerning the present crisis in South Africa and South Africa's attempts to destabilize all of Southern Africa. We also discussed the history and programme of the ANC and its vision for the future of South Africa.

Dr. Avery Post, President of the United Church of Christ, stated at the meeting: "The racist apartheid regime in South Africa

is perpetrating one of the greatest crimes against humanity that has been witnessed in history. These crimes are not dissimilar or unrelated to the holocaust during the World War II, and both of these crimes against humanity were borne out of, similar racist/fascist ideologies... We are called by God to promote God's justice".

In response, ANC's Pallo Jordan stated, "We have had reason, especially since 1980, to be extremely disappointed with the sorts of responses we have been able to get from the Administration in the United States on issues related to Southern Africa. And we are pleased to have this opportunity to meet with the people like yourselves who have been with us in the trenches, fighting the same end."

Thabo Mbeki focussed on the long history and deep affection of the South African people for the African National Congress, reminding us that, "The ANC was founded in 1912 as an organisation committed to the democratic, non-racial transformation of South Africa. Naturally, we have deep roots without our communities. Generations of Black South Africans have grown up in the ANC. So even if they arrested all the leaders and activists, the community would carry on in the spirit and the name of the ANC."  
**South African terrorism**

Mbeki also reported on the latest murderous acts of terrorism committed by the government of South Africa against the ANC: the assassination of Dulcie September, the ANC's Paris representative; the car bombing of Albie Sachs, an ANC lawyer in Mozambique; the attempted bombing of ANC's chief representative in Brussels; and the

scores of other persons who have been murdered by South Africa's "Z death squads" in raids on the neighbouring front-line nations.

While I was in Botswana I saw the terrible devastation at the site of a recent raid where South Africa's death squad had murdered and burned the bodies of four people, three of them young women. One of the victims was a church member of the United Congregational Church of South Africa.

Also at the meeting Ruth Mompati spoke of the millions of children who are being physically and psychologically tortured at the hands of the South African government. She talked about the ANC youth programme that established schools to care for and and prepare the youth who escape from South Africa for future leadership. The beauty of the ANC is that it is preparing future leaders while still respecting the wisdom of the senior leaders of the struggle.

The President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, is 70 years old. He was once the law partner of Nelson Mandela, the noted ANC leader. Mandela has been a political prisoner in South Africa for 26 years. Those at the meeting reminded us that on July 18th of 1988 there will be an international celebration of Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday.

As our meeting ended, a member of the ANC delegation requested prayer. Suddenly another member of the ANC began to sing "We shall overcome", and, as our voices joined in song, we formed a circle and held hands. As the South Africans say, "Amandla!" - "Power to the people."