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TRUTH COMMISSION BUCKLES
UNDER PRESSURE

ANC seeks amnesty for atrocities

IT COULD TAKE years for the amnesty committee to complete its work and alternatives are being considered as the deadline on June 30 approaches. **ANDRE KOOPMAN, ROGER BRAND** and **MIKE MASIPA** report.

ANC members have applied for amnesty for the 1983 Church Street bomb in Pretoria, a wave of bomb attacks at Wimpy restaurants during the 1980s and atrocities committed in ANC camps in Angola, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed yesterday.

But the process of hearing the thousands of outstanding amnesty applications seems set to drag on indefinitely, with senior commission officials announcing for the first time that the body's amnesty committee would not be able to meet its June 30 deadline. "It could take months, it could take years," said commission deputy chairperson Dr Alex Boraine.

The TRC announced that it was investigating the possibility of extending the committee's lifespan, while another option

being considered was to replace the amnesty committee with a new mechanism. The commission was originally scheduled to complete its work in June last year.

Commission chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu told a news conference in Cape Town yesterday that the committee had processed only 36% of the 7 046 amnesty applications received, and that 4 471 applications were still to be considered. Of these, 1 387 would have to be heard in public because they involved gross human rights abuses.

Member of the amnesty committee and commissioner Mr Denzil Potgieter said any alternative structure would have to have "roughly the same character as the existing committee", but would have to be "delinked from the TRC". The work of the TRC would go on but it would not be named

TREFWOORDE

- 1 *Juba D.*
- 2 *Boraine AL.*
- 3 *P. Koopman*
- 4 *Koopman*
- 5 *Boraine*
- 6 *Lyde*
- 7 *Akhuma*
- 8 *Kommasus*
- 9 *Amnesty*
- 10 *N. van der Merwe*

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the TRC, Tutu added. Another option was for President Nelson Mandela to name a panel of judges to continue the work.

Tutu revealed for the first time that ANC members had applied for amnesty for the bombing of the South African Air Force headquarters in Church Street, Pretoria, in May 1983. Nineteen people died when a bomb secreted in a stolen car detonated prematurely, killing the two bombers identified by police at the time as Bakayi Maseko and Freddie Shongwe.

According to the ANC's written submission to the TRC last May, its former president Mr Oliver Tambo had ordered the bombing to avenge a cross-border raid into Lesotho by South African security forces in which 42 ANC supporters were killed.

The ANC said the operation had been planned by its Special Operations Command, then under the command of uMkhonto

weSizwe General Aboobaker Ismail, now a member of the Defence Secretariat — the body responsible for policy and planning in the SA National Defence Force.

Ismail has confirmed applying for amnesty, but has declined to reveal for what incidents.

Tutu's statement is also believed to be the first confirmation that ANC members were behind the attacks on Wimpy Bar restaurants in the mid 1980s, which the ANC had previously suggested were false flag operations carried out by apartheid agents to discredit the organisation.

ANC National Executive Committee member Mr Mac Maharaj told the TRC last year that the organisation had initially accepted that MK operatives could be responsible for the Wimpy Bar blasts, but later began to suspect that the apartheid government had been responsible.

● Tutu further announced that ANC members were seeking amnesty for: human rights violations in ANC camps in Angola, Botswana and Zambia; assassinations within South Africa; landmine operations in the former Transvaal; the bombings of Wits Command and the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court; attacks on policemen and police stations; the killing of IFP members by ANC Self Defence Unit members on the East Rand in the 1990s; involvement in KwaZulu-Natal violence; and the Shell House shootings in 1994.

Members of former state structures had applied in connection with: cross-border operations, including the June 1986 Botswana raid and the December 1985 Maseru raid; assassinations outside South Africa; and the bombing of the ANC's London office when its leaders were in exile.

He said members of the PAC had submitted applications for: attacks at the Crazy Beat Disco, Newcastle, and the Yellowwoods Hotel, Fort Beaufort; attacks on farms in the Tzaneen, Grahamstown and Pietermaritzburg areas; robberies at businesses by Apla Re-Possession Units; and attacks on policemen.

● IFP members had entered applications concerning hit-squad killings and weapons supplies to IFP-aligned operatives in the 1990s.

● Right-wing operatives were applying in connection with the purchase and smuggling of illegal weapons.

'It could take months, it could take years'
— Alex Boraine

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