

**FREE THE  
TRADE UNIONISTS  
STOP THE  
REPRESSION NOW!**



**JOINT CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE REPRESSION OF TRADE  
UNIONISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA, c/o AAM, 13  
Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DW. Tel. 01-387 7966.**

## (1) Tjeluvuyo Mgedezi

In May 1987 three members of the South African National Union of Mineworkers were sentenced to death in the Klerksdorp Regional Court. They had been convicted of the murder of four team leaders at the Vaal Reefs gold mine in February 1986. The incident occurred at a time of great protest activity at the mine – 1900 miners went on strike at the time of their arrest. The three NUM members had led protests against the carrying of arms by the team leaders – team leaders are clearly identified by the miners and NUM as part of the oppressive system of exploitation which is so characteristic of the South African mining industry.

A strong campaign to secure clemency for the three men – Tjeluvuyo Mgedezi (28), Solomon Nongwati (38) and Paulos Tsehlana (28) was launched in South Africa and equally strong international support materialised. The NUM in Britain launched a petition in support of the three – the results of which were presented to Downing Street in July 1988.

In September 1988 the appeal of the three was heard and two of them – Nongwati and Tsehlana were acquitted and were set free. This tremendous success for the campaign was tempered with the resolve to secure a similar outcome for Mgedezi who remains on death row.

The NUM in Britain together with the Joint Campaign are stepping up their efforts to secure justice for Mgedezi.





**TRADE UNIONISTS  
AT RISK:  
FOUR KEY CASES**

## (2) The Alexandra Five

Moses Mayekiso, the General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), is presently on trial with four other men – Obed Bapela, Richard Mdakane, Paul Tshabalala and his brother Mzwanele Mayekiso – charged with treason, subversion and sedition.

These charges arise from the massive protest activity that took place in Alexandra Township during 1985/86 when the people successfully resisted the apartheid security forces by establishing community-based street committees and organising stay-aways and consumer boycotts. Moses Mayekiso was chair of the Alexandra Action Committee which co-ordinated much of this anti-apartheid activity. The State is trying to prove in this key case that these activities are 'treasonable' in an attempt to intimidate and deter the thousands of anti-apartheid activists involved in such a resistance across the country.

Moses Mayekiso was formerly the General Secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Unions which amalgamated with other metal workers to form NUMSA – the second largest affiliate of COSATU. Moses, who was arrested on 28 June 1986 a few days after the declaration of the State of Emergency, was elected General Secretary while in detention. His case and that of his four comrades has attracted support from many trade unionists both in Britain and internationally.



## (4) The Putco Drivers

In August 1988, three Putco drivers and one unemployed man were sentenced to death. They were found guilty of murdering a Putco driver who refused to join a strike. During the strike over two hundred workers were sacked and the police were used to break up protests. The three drivers are Stanford Ngubo, Johannes Buthelezi and Bethuel Sabelo. The unemployed man is William Khuzwayo.

The judge found that the three drivers had hired Khuzwayo to kill the working driver. He felt that the fact that the drivers did not pull the trigger did not make them any less guilty. The defence lawyers pointed out the abnormal circumstances at the time. The judge refused permission to appeal against the death sentences. The International Transport Workers Federation have launched a campaign to save the lives of the four men.



These are only some of the cases of trade union repression under apartheid that the Joint Campaign is focussing on; amongst others are:

- the case of members of SARHWU sentenced to death following the killing of 4 workers during the bitter 1987 strike.
- CCAWUSA shop steward William Ntombela presently on death row.
- three members of POTWA who are on charges of 'sabotage' for their involvement in an industrial dispute.

The Joint Campaign Against the Repression of Trade Unionists in South Africa and Namibia has the aim of mobilising the widest possible support of the labour movement and beyond in Britain in solidarity with all those trade unionists suffering repression because of their opposition to apartheid.

Launched on 1 February 1988 with the support of 39 national trade unions the Joint Campaign needs your active support – NOW!

### **Trade unionists in South Africa and Namibia are under attack.**

Because of their crucial role in the fight against apartheid, the independent and non-racial trade unions in both Namibia and South Africa are subjected to particularly severe repression. They have appealed to the international trade union movement for solidarity.

In 1987, in response to an unprecedented upsurge in trade union growth and action in South Africa, with a record nine million working days being lost through strike action and political stay-aways, the racist state struck back with a vicious onslaught, including:

- the detention of thousands of trade unionists
- political trials involving trade union officials and shop stewards
- the imposition of the death sentence on union activists, and
- physical attacks on union personnel and buildings.

This culminated on 24 February 1988 with the imposition of drastic restrictions on the largest trade union federation in South Africa – the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) – as part of a wider clampdown in which 17 anti-apartheid organisations were banned.

This broadsheet has been prepared by the **Joint Campaign Against the Repression of Trade Unionists in South Africa and Namibia** in response to the demand of Namibian and South African trade unions for increased solidarity with their struggle for national liberation. Thousands of trade unionists in Britain and internationally have already responded to appeals for solidarity – but much more needs to be done.

The **Joint Campaign** was set up by the Anti-Apartheid Movement's Trade Union Committee and SATIS (Southern Africa the Imprisoned Society) in response to increasing attacks on trade unions. It provides a framework – and resources – for trade unionists wishing to campaign against the repression of trade unionists under apartheid.

There are a number of campaign sheets available highlighting particular cases or repression. The Joint Campaign also produces an occasional newsletter to which trade union branches can subscribe. To order these materials, please use the form on the reverse.

### **NAMIBIA – AFRICA'S LAST COLONY**

The past two years have seen a massive increase in trade union activity within Namibia. In a county illegally ruled by the apartheid regime with an occupying force of 100,000 troops, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), founded in 1976-7 by SWAPO's Department of Labour, heads the struggle of Namibian workers for their rights. Despite constant harassment by the state, the NUNW has

become increasingly successful in co-ordinating union activity. New unions have been launched in several sectors including the Namibia Food and Allied Union, Namibian Public Workers Union, the Metal and Allied Namibian Workers Union, the Namibian Transport and Allied Workers Union and the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN) – 4000 members of which came out on strike in July 1987 in dispute with the British-owned Tsumeb Corporation.

Trade union demands in Namibia have centred around demands for an end to the contract labour scheme – a key element of the apartheid system in Namibia. Aside from wages and conditions, the trade unions have also come out in opposition to apartheid repression – most notably with a huge two-day stay-away in June 1988 in support of a school students' boycott protesting against the role of the army and police.

These actions show that the labour movement identifies fully with the wider struggle for Namibia's independence – which requires the immediate implementation of UN Security Resolution 435. South Africa is committed to leaving Namibia in 1989 but has a long history of renegeing on international agreements.

The mobilisation of trade unionists behind these demands has led to attacks, including the detention of several trade union leaders. In September 1987 MUN General Secretary Ben Uulenga was detained after a solidarity visit to Britain and other countries – and only released after an international outcry. The SWAPO Secretary of Labour Jason Angula was detained in October 1987 and was released following a major campaign.

### **SOUTH AFRICA**

In December 1985, a landmark was reached in the struggle for national liberation with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Since that time COSATU has rapidly grown in strength and size, and now represents 1 million workers in South Africa.

COSATU has campaigned strongly for a living wage for all, for the establishment of one union in each industry, for one united trade union centre, and for a non-racial approach in opposition to the apartheid system. Heir to the traditions established in the 1950s by SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions), COSATU has sought to pursue the interests of workers as an integral part of the fight for national liberation. In doing so it has won the grudging respect of many employers – and the unremitting hostility of the Botha regime.

In the space of a few months in 1987, six railworkers were brutally shot at a peaceful demonstration, COSATU House was bombed by government-backed vigilantes, and numerous trade union activists were physically attacked, arrested or detained. Hundreds of trade unionists still remain in prison – many without trial. Others face serious charges, including the possible threat of execution, as a result of their supposed crimes in opposing apartheid. A survey by the now banned Detainees Parents Support Committee revealed that whereas in 1986 only 4% of those detained were trade unionists, by 1987 this had increased to 24%. Hence the 'Hands off COSATU' campaign launched by the federation to mobilise international pressure against these attacks.

## **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION**

- Ensure your Union branch is affiliated to the Anti-Apartheid Movement
- Subscribe to the Joint Campaign mailing list. This will enable you to receive up-to-date campaign sheets on the different cases of repression of trade unionists.
- Mobilise your union to adopt a motion supporting the Joint Campaign:

*'This branch condemns the increasing repression of trade unionists in South Africa and Namibia, and calls on the trade union movement to step up its campaigns in solidarity with our trade union brothers and sisters facing oppression for their supposed crimes in opposing apartheid. This branch resolves to subscribe to the Joint Campaign Mailing and/or affiliate to the Anti-Apartheid Movement.'*

- Request a speaker from the Joint Campaign to address your Union branch.
- Urge your union to take up the cases of trade unionists with whom they share a common bond; write a letter to or article for your union's journal.
- Support the families and dependants of trade unionists in Namibia and South Africa suffering from political repression – donate to the Joint Campaign and/or the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (Canon Collins House, 64 Essex Road, London N1 8LR)
- Send protests to South African Embassy, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London WC2. 01-930 4488.

# CAMPAIGN FORM

We wish to support the Joint Campaign Against the Repression of Trade Unionists in South Africa and Namibia.

Please send us ..... copies of this campaign broadsheet.

We are specifically concerned with the case(s) of:

- |   |                          |                        |                          |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tjeluvuyo Mgedezi .....                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | POTWA 3 .....          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| PUTCO Drivers .....                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Oscar Mpetha .....     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The SARHWU 4 .....                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | William Ntombela ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Moses Mayekiso – The Alexandra Five ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |                        |                          |

We enclose a donation to the Joint Campaign of £ .....

We enclose a donation for South African and Namibian political prisoners £ .....

We enclose £5 to subscribe to the Joint Campaign Newsletter. (Please note affiliates of the AAM will receive the newsletter free of charge.)

If you wish to make a donation for a particular case, please indicate which one your branch wishes to support. All money will be sent to the general relief funds established in South Africa and Namibia, through IDAF or other safe channels where they exist.

Union Branch:

Contact Name:

Address:

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