



# conference resolutions

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## Resolution on Fedsaw

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This National Conference of the Black Sash believing

- a. that women have an important part to play in building a society free from discrimination and oppression and have a proud history in South Africa of opposition to injustice;
- b. that while there are many barriers in our society, our identity as women provides us with one common bond that can help us to transcend them and so to work for unity instead of division;
- c. that we share with the Federation of South African Women a desire to 'bring the women of South Africa together to secure full equality of opportunity for all women, regardless of race, colour or creed; to work for the protection and empowerment of the women and children of our land' (Draft Constitution of Fedsaw);
- d. that we as an organisation have much to contribute as well as a great deal to learn from participation in a more widely representative body;
- e. that such participation could well provide for us a model of the society which we seek for South Africa in the future: open, participatory, tolerant of difference while committed to overcoming divisiveness;
- f. that a national federation of women's organisations committed to unity, democracy and non-racialism could co-ordinate campaigns with a particular focus on women's rights while allowing each organisation to pursue its own specific undertakings; and  
recognising that attempts to create such a national federation or organisation have been hampered by the difficulty of prior consultation on a very wide front;

We do hereby resolve:

1. to welcome the initiative to revive and build a federation of South African women;
2. to encourage all our regions and members to take an active part in seeking and strengthening contact with Fedsaw;
3. to participate in the discussion and consideration of the Black Sash's relationship with Fedsaw;

4. to work in close association with Fedsaw on campaigns and projects so that the process of building trust and friendship may become a reality in practice as well as in principle;
5. to make it our concern to draw other women's organisations into this experience.

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## Resolution on Conscription

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We repeat our call for an end to conscription, to the use of our young men in an overt war in Angola and to their use in clandestine operations in South Africa and neighbouring states.

We reiterate our opposition to their use in an on-going civil war within South Africa where they are used to suppress the legitimate aspirations of voteless people.

Furthermore, we support the End Conscription Campaign in its short-term goals:

1. To extend the right of rendering community service to all those who in good conscience are opposed to serving in the SADF, not just to religious pacifists.
2. That they should serve the same length of time as military service, not a punitive one-and-a-half times the length.
3. That this service should be available in community, religious and welfare organisations and not just in government departments.
4. That those who are conscripted into the SADF are given the right to refuse to serve in townships, Namibia and other southern African countries.

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## Statement on Detentions

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We, the Black Sash, repeat our condemnation of the practice of detention in the overall state strategy of silencing opposition.

We note that an estimated 1 500 people are still incarcerated in political internment in South Africa, many of whom have been held for 20 months.

We also condemn the silencing of all organisations who have had the courage to explore the scale and depth of inhumane treatment of the detention strategy.

We reaffirm our commitment to monitoring and opposing ever-increasing repression in South Africa.

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## Statement on the Restriction of Individuals and Organisations

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Meeting for the first time since the 24 February banning of people and restriction of 18 organisations, this National Conference of the Black Sash reaffirms its commitment to the pursuit of justice.

We condemn the new regulations as we continue to oppose the State of Emergency itself. We demand that the curbs be lifted so that organisations and individuals can continue their important work for justice and freedom.

Increased repression challenges us to review yet more urgently our aims, policies and strategies, to align ourselves with the Churches in their principled non-violent action; and to share more actively and sacrificially in the broad democratic movement for a post-apartheid Southern Africa in which all inhabitants and countries of the region can live together in justice, peace, friendship and mutual assistance in development.




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## Education Statement

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The control of education is control of ideology and therefore is unlikely to be relinquished by the state. The divisive strategies of the different education departments and the increasing use of police, security forces and the SADF in schools requires to be nationally monitored and exposed as each region of South Africa manifests different forms of educational control and repression.

The Black Sash urges its members to involve themselves actively in schools, universities and colleges, in parent teacher associations, school boards, school committees and university councils. Members should identify and support progressive teachers. Members should resist the increasing militarisation of schools, exercise their legal option for their sons not to participate in the cadet system and encourage other parents to do the same.

\* *In response to a suggestion from National Conference a forthcoming issue of SASH will focus specifically on education in South Africa. Ed.*

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## Statement on Homelessness

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In South Africa we are still in the throes of dispossession, the story of our land for 300 years. At a time when one South African out of six is homeless, there are continued forced removals, demolitions and evictions and there is no

priority of state spending on housing for the poor and the very poor.

In many parts of the world countries are trying to repair the ravages of land seizures and to find ways around the vast issues of the economies of housing great numbers of poor people.

The United Nations Charter, Article 17(1) reads: everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others; and Article 25 (1) reads: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services.

The Black Sash, believing that people should have the right to live where they wish, in adequate shelter, endorses the above code. However, in South Africa, there is no chance of meeting these requirements until the Land Act and the Group Areas Act have been abolished.

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## Statement on Children

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The Black Sash once again pledges itself to work towards the elimination of discriminatory law and practice which is causing gross deprivation to our children, especially those who are deprived of adequate education, health care, housing, proper parenting and protective legislation.

We demand for children in both the rural and urban areas:

1. better health care, including an adequate diet and accessible medical care;
2. an education system which gives each child an optimum chance to develop his/her potential and is acceptable to members of the community;
3. that all children in detention either be released or brought to trial and that the Child-care Act be adhered to for all children at all times;
4. that suitable places of safety be found so that children do not have to be held in police cells while awaiting trial (In 1986, 58 962 children were held in police cells);
5. that children in detention or awaiting trial have access to social workers, lawyers, doctors and their parents at all times, to prevent abuse occurring and to see that their needs can be attended to;
6. that all children caught up in the spiral of violence have access to counselling and rehabilitative services.

The Black Sash commits itself to working towards these ends and also requests its Regions to join with other organisations either by joining a Free the Children Alliance or initiating such a body in those areas where one does not exist. □