

# The state and violence - What is the link?

War has been declared on the people of South Africa. We as workers are bearing the brunt of it.

It affects each one of us. As we stand waiting for taxis, as we catch trains, in the mine hostels, in our communities - we wait fearing the sudden rain of bullets, fearing the sudden burst of fire as another home goes up in flames, fearing the silent attacks in the night while we try to sleep.

And while we are at work, we worry about the safety of our families and our homes.

The newspapers say that it is "black on black" fighting. They say it is different "tribes" fighting one another - Zulus fighting Xhosas or different political groups, such as the ANC fighting Inkatha.

They claim that black communities and organisations can never work together. Yet years of struggle have proved that we CAN work together to build a non-racial and democratic South Africa. NUM, COSATU and the ANC are proof of this.

## WHY THE VIOLENCE NOW?

The government is using a double strategy. It wants to negotiate to obtain international credibility, but at the same time it wants to weaken us as the mass movement.

It is precisely BECAUSE we as the masses WERE SUCCEEDING in mobilising millions of people that we now pose a real threat. The government does not want to negotiate with a strong

and united movement. It wants to negotiate with a weak and divided movement, so that it can dictate the pace and content of negotiations.

What we are witnessing now is nothing more than DESTABILISATION - of our organisations and our communities.

The task of vigilantes and right wing elements is to terrorise and confuse people.

Special forces in the SADF and Police have been linked to many of the attacks we have recently seen. White men in black balaclavas have been involved in:

- The September killings in Tembisa & Thokoza when 12 people were shot and hacked to death.
- The September 6 killings when 6 people were shot dead by white men in a minibus in the street and in their houses.
- The shooting outside Jeppe Station on the same day.
- The attack on the Phola Park squatter camp.

It is clear to all of us who live in the townships that the police have not been taking strong enough action against the vigilantes. By creating turmoil, the government is making it difficult for us to come together and discuss our problems - things such as low wages, high rents, poor services and a host of other issues.

When we cannot meet we cannot discuss our problems. When we cannot meet we cannot organise. Unorganised we are victims, not soldiers.

## OUR DEMANDS

We need to demand that the security forces, the SAP and the SADF be made accountable to the public.

This means that we need:

- A code of conduct for all members of the police force.
- An independent body which is not part of the government to investigate complaints against the police.
- The suspension of police force members who exceed the code of conduct.
- The breaking up of organisations such as the CCB and askaris, which despite denials of their existence, have clearly played into the violence.

## WHAT IS OUR ROLE ?

In every area of the country vigilantes look for small differences within communities or workplaces which they can exploit - differences such as the languages people speak; differences between young and old; hostel-dwellers and communities; between squatters and those with houses...

They use these differences to recruit people and then to wage war against us.

Comrades, we cannot fall prey to these schemes. We cannot fall prey to rumours and provocation. We need to build self-defence committees.

Divided we are easy victims for the agents of the state. United we can defeat those who wish to wage war on us...

*"Spread the message of unity - don't let others divide us"*

