

EDITORIAL

The upsurge of the mass democratic movement against the Botha-Malan regime has been reflected in the increase of judicial murders in South Africa.

The case of the Sharpville Six is well-known. They were sentenced to death on the 13th Decembe 1985 for the death of a Lekoa town council on the day of the Vaal uprising, during a mass protest against rent increases. The judge admitted there was no direct evidence connecting the Six with the actual murder, nevertheless he convicted them under the law of common cause, and refused to find extenuating circumstances.

Their sentence high lights the extreme lengths the South Africa state is prepared to go to protect black sell-outs co-opted into government service, where-ever there is unrest, whoever may be even remotely connected can be blamed foor whatever may result. ,moreover thee white ellectorate must see "law and order" firmly mantained.

The final reprieve of the Six in November 1988 in no shows official admission of a miscarriage of justice, and even less was it an act of gratuitous confession. Black lives were cynically traded for white lives, four white police-men being reprieved as well.

That the Six were temporarily reprieved in March and finally reprieved in November has been the result of intense international pressure, as well as pressure inside South Africa itself. This included appeals by Head of States, the Security Council and European COMMUNITY and anti-apartheid movements and supporters world-wide.

To oppose the judicial slaughter of the 64 South African patriots presently on death row remains an urgent priority, especially for the religious Community. Through oār faith we are called to struggle for justice and peace and furthermore, are called to see all human life as having ultimate worth, being in the image of God.

Significantly, the South African Council of Churches in its 1988 Annual Conference called for the abolition of the death penalty as such. Currently a total of 290 are on death row. The S.A.C.C. recognise that this appalling number, most of them black, is caused partly by the apartheid judicial system, but even more by general alienation in a disturbed society.

The recent sentencing of the Delmas trialists for high teason shows the battle-lines more rightly drawn than ever. The mass democratic movement has no space left to struggle for change in legal and peaceful ways.

This is a great challenge to the Churches inside South Africa who still have some room to promote change.

Also to the religious community, among others, world-wide. We call for increased support to the African National Congress openly and in good concience, that the apartheid system of death may be replaced by an open society, where all South Africans live in mutual support, freedom and peace..

Let us all say apartheid must go.