

STATEMENT ON WEEK OF NATIONAL MASS ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE IN NATAL

The war in Natal has cost the lives of over three thousand of our people, tens of thousands have been made homeless, and incalculable misery and suffering has been brought to the millions of our people living there.

The Mass Democratic Movement and the ANC have made numerous attempts to bring peace to the region. These have been repeatedly scuttled by the leadership of Inkatha, and the apartheid regime, whose actions have made it abundantly clear that they have no interest in bringing peace to Natal. Their only concern has been to try and wipe out all opposition to apartheid. This has meant waging war on the entire people of Natal.

It has therefore become obvious to our people and their organisations in Natal and throughout the country, that peace initiatives at regional level are doomed to failure at this stage. The war in Natal is a national political issue which can only be resolved by putting pressure on those who have the power to end this war - the apartheid regime and their repressive agencies.

This bitter realisation which had dawned after previous attempts at regional peace initiatives had failed, led to the decision to embark on national mass action. This was not a decision which was taken lightly. Those communities affected by the conflict have been involved in extensive discussions for several months on what form this mass action should take. Organisations in other regions of the country have been calling for national mass action since at least the end of last year.

These discussions led to the decision to embark on a week of national mass protest from the 2nd of July. The purpose of the national action is to put pressure on FW de Klerk to put an end to the war in Natal (see demands). We believe that the apartheid state has the capacity to end this conflict, if it can find the political will. The national mass action is designed to encourage them to find that will.

The reason we are using stayaway and other mass actions to apply this pressure is that we have no other weapon at our disposal. The apartheid state and Inkatha have access to armies, police forces, and unlimited access to weapons. We have the support of the people, and the peoples strongest weapon is mass action.

Programme of Action

The programme of action will be as follows:

1. Stayaway on Monday 2nd July. This will not only affect Natal, but will be observed in all areas throughout the country.
2. National marches and rallies on Saturday 7th July. These will take place in all regions of the country (see attached list).
3. Local actions from 2nd - 6th July. Organisations in the locals around the country will be embarking on actions such as demonstrations, meetings, marches etc during this period. The type of action and the timing of such actions will depend on conditions in each local. We encourage all organisations to take the initiative to express their solidarity with the people of Natal during this period.

Call for discipline

COSATU, UDF and SAYCO call for discipline and restraint during the week of action and particularly during the stayaway. Our organisations are making sure that the reasons for the stayaway are fully explained to the people. No one will be forced to participate in the stayaway against their will. In addition, Journalists and health workers will not be expected to participate in the stayaway irrespective of whether they support it or not. On the other hand we also call on those who oppose the mass action to respect the rights of the people who want to participate in the stayaway.

Call to the police

We call on the police to refrain from intimidating the people and trying to prevent them from engaging in this mass action. Recent experience clearly demonstrates that where the police restrain themselves, there is minimal violence in these situations. Police intervention and provocation can only result in violence and deaths.

We also call on the police and Inkatha to stop distributing smear pamphlets in an attempt to disrupt the action. On Thursday the 21 June a member of the Kwa-Zulu Legislative Assembly, Mr A Ndlovu, was seen distributing pamphlets in New Hanover area, driving a vehicle with the number plate NK 5544J. This pamphlet attacks Cosatu and its General Secretary Jay Naidoo and is both defamatory and inflammatory. The vehicle has been traced and discovered to belong to the District Commandant of the SAP in Pietermaritzburg. This is one more incident confirming that SAP and Inkatha are working hand in hand to destroy all opposition in Natal. We call for an immediate investigation and the dismissal of those responsible.

Call to organisations opposing the mass action.

The overwhelming majority of anti-apartheid organisations in our country have expressed support for the week of mass action. However the PAC and PAC-aligned organisations have opposed the mass action. This does not surprise us as the PAC has a record of opposing all mass action embarked on by the ANC and the MDM. They have opposed previous stayaways, rent boycotts etc. They opposed the defiance campaign, which also contributed to their unbanning. They opposed the Conference for a Democratic Future. Despite this all these mass actions and initiatives were highly successful because they had overwhelming support from the people.

Nevertheless these divisive calls and actions by the PAC can only benefit the enemy. We therefore call on them, even at this late stage, to withdraw their opposition to the mass action, and to contribute towards pressurising the regime to end the violence in Natal. Attacking us through the press will make no contribution in this direction.

Call to ordinary Inkatha members

This mass action is not aimed at you, the ordinary Inkatha members. It is aimed at the warlords, the Kwa-Zulu police the South African Government and all those perpetrating this senseless violence in Natal.

We are appealing to Inkatha members who are disgusted with the atrocities being committed in your name to participate in this mass action against the war in Natal. We know that many Inkatha members do not support what the warlords and the Inkatha leadership is doing. Now is the opportunity to demonstrate this through united mass action with your brothers and sisters

International support.

We have received enormous international support for our campaign for peace in Natal. Tens of millions of workers organised in the ICFTU, CTUC, WFTU and many other trade union federations have expressed support for our campaign. This support has also been expressed by the ILO and anti-apartheid organisations around the world. We call on the international community to step up the campaign against the war in Natal and to put pressure on FW De Klerk to meet our peoples demands.

Call for an end to all apartheid violence against our people.

Apartheid violence is increasing against our people. The war in Natal is the most extreme example, but it has taken many other forms. Police brutality, vigilante attacks in the townships, death squad assassinations, and right wing fascist violence are all continuing under FW De Klerk's Government.

The week of action will be focusing on Natal, but we will also be demanding an end to all these acts of apartheid terror against our people. Until apartheid terror in Natal and other parts of our country is ended, there can be no question of there being a climate of free political activity. The week of national mass action is therefore also intended to bring home to De Klerk that unless decisive action is taken to end this violence, the government is seriously jeopardising the process of negotiations.

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