

SUBMISSION OF THE UNITING REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

1. GENERAL

This submission is the response of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) to the invitation of the TRC to the religious community in SA to consider submissions regarding:

1.1 The extent to which our denomination through its theology and activities contributed to the formation of motives and perspectives of individuals, organisations and institutions that led to the gross violations of human rights in respect of both opposition to as well as the upholding of apartheid;

1.2 The contribution of our denomination in the creation of a climate or justification of gross human rights violations;

1.3 The extent to which our denomination through its acts of commission or omission contributed to the conflict of the past.

1.4 The failure to remain true to the principles of our faith that opposes human rights violations;

1.5 The ways in which our denomination actively opposed (gross) human rights violations.

We are further requested to:

1.6 Indicate how our denomination can contribute to the healing, reparation and rehabilitation of victims and perpetrators of violations;

1.7 Suggest recommendations by the TRC in the prevention of human rights violations;

1.8 Suggest recommendations by the TRC in promotion of national unity and reconciliation.

2. BACKGROUND - CHURCH HISTORY

To enable the correct understanding of this submission it is necessary to shortly relate the history of our church:

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2.1 In 1881 the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) decided to establish separate churches for different races. It must be borne in mind that the establishment of the segregated churches (DRMC, DRCA and RCA) did not flow from any desire of the members of these churches, but is the direct result of racism within the DRC. Members of the DRC objected to sharing the holy communion with people of colour. For the sake of "the weakness of some" and not because of theological reasons, the DRC then chose to form separate racial churches.

This act is a denial of the spirit of holy communion. Holy communion, by its nature, expresses the unity of believers in fellowship with Christ and each other.

2.2 From 1881 up to April 1994 four racially divided churches existed. The Reformed Church in Africa (RCA - Indians), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA - blacks), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC -coloureds) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC — whites) existed independent of each other, at least in as far as their decisions were concerned.

The history of the "daughter Churches" however was intertwined with the history of the DRC. This related in particular to the DRC's influence via the leadership of "missionaries", financial dependency and theological training.

2.3 The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa was formed by the unification of the DRCA and the DRMC in April 1994. The run up to this union finds its origins in the decisions of 1978. The reunification of the DRC family was then stated as the ideal.

The URCSA therefore has a short history. The relevant information in this submission relates to the history of the former DRMC and DRCA.

The amalgamation of the two churches represents a watershed in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA. This union represents a kairos moment in the life of the church in which it departs from apartheid and contradicts the justification of racially divided churches. The event of unification furthermore had great symbolic value in view of the historical context in which it took place, namely 10 days before the first free and democratic elections in SA.

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2.4 Structurally the denomination consist of congregations (community of believers) with church councils being the legal persons, presbyteries (grouping of congregations that meets once a year), regional synods (groupings of congregations within previously determined regional boundaries and meeting at least once every three years) and a general synod (national meeting of the church, meeting ever four years). The denomination consist of 483 793 confessing members and 683 congregations.

3. POINTS OF DEPARTURE OF SUBMISSION

We firstly wish to elucidate the premise against which this submission must be considered.

3.1 It is not possible to reflect every decision and action of this denomination. The submission is therefore restricted to a broad presentation. Irrespective of this limitation we will endeavour to* give the reader a full as possible picture of this church in regard to the subject matter.

3.2 As we understand the letter dated 29th May 1997, the TRC is primarily concerned with the question of human rights violations and more expressly gross human rights violations. We also understand that the context of these violations relate to the institution, justification and defence of apartheid as primary cause for the nature and degree of these violations.

3.3 We make this submission within a particular human rights paradigm, namely that of the' Freedom Charter of 1955, the International Bill of Rights and subsequent international instruments of human rights (with reference to political, social and economic rights) and the impact hereof on the definition of human rights within the framework of the Transitional Constitution of 1994 and the New Constitution of 1996.

3.4 We also make our submission against the backdrop that our acts or omissions with regard to human rights violations is not only a social contextual, but also ecclesiological (church) contextual matter.

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A popular slogan of the eighties: "The Church - Site of Struggle" is relevant in this regard. The historical and contemporary self understanding of the church, as portrayed in this slogan, is that the church as one of the institutions in society did not remain unaffected by the all -encompassing influence of apartheid. The slogan led to the realisation that the same contradictions prevalent in apartheid society are present and reflected in the teaching and life of the church. In this sense our

submission reflects a church context representing the struggle both within and that of the church (outwardly).

4. THE URCSA'S CONTRIBUTION TO VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

We will combine the themes of 1. 1 - 1.3 above for the sake of our submission under this subheading.

4.1 Clarifying our understanding

Human rights violations has a physical and emotional side to it. Although the TRC is mainly concerned with gross human rights violations we, for the sake of a holistic approach, will not make any distinction.

We do however distinguish between human rights violations by our members and those committed AGAINST our members. Our membership being predominantly "black" and "coloured", it is common cause that in either case violations refer to collaboration with the apartheid government in its defence of apartheid and alternatively the struggle against apartheid.

We distinguish between (a) official decisions and actions of the church (as reflected in minutes and registers of decisions), (b) organisations and actions within the church and (c) organisations and actions outside the church in which members participated.

In view of the above distinction, this submission relates primarily to the official decisions and actions of the church whilst attempting to indicate its relationship to other actions within and outside the church.

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4.2 Human rights violations

We do not intend defining the extent and results of apartheid and the violation of human rights. We limit ourselves to the extent to which the URCSA, as successor of the DRMC an DRCA, on the one hand contributed to the formation of motives and perspectives in the defence of or the struggle against apartheid and on the other hand our part in the creation of a climate of human rights abuses and resulting conflicts.

4.2.1 Violation of human rights in the struggle against apartheid

We are not able to indicate the extent to which decisions of the church contributed to or incited people to violence. We however need to recognize that the ambiguous nature of decision with regard to

justified actions against apartheid, was often left to the conscience of members. This state of affairs contributed to difference of opinion on the matter of the "indiscriminate" use of violence and some offensives of the military wings of the liberation movements. Whilst it may be said that the church called for peaceful protests, the absence of clear decisions inevitably did not prevent nor condemn violation of human rights in the struggle against apartheid.

4.2.2 Violation of human rights by the Apartheid Government

The URCSA never condoned but rather sought to criticise the Apartheid government for the violation of rights. In this regard, it can be indicated that church's decisions and synodical debates (that are not always reflected in minutes) exposed members to persecution. In this sense members became the victims of violations. When with the benefit of hindsight, we ask ourselves whether the church has done enough to prevent and oppose human rights violations, we emphatically answer: No!

4.2.3 Criticism of Apartheid

With regard to the theme in 1.5, we will later indicate the nature of the church's opposition to apartheid and human rights violations. Within the parameters of this subsection we need to acknowledge that the decisions of the church does not reflect a consequent and considered opposition to apartheid.

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There is, up to 1971, a general lack of minutes indicating a clear anti-apartheid stance., In the same sense there is an absence of criticism of the actions of government. The absence of decisions and actions represent a blatant omission and silent approval of the conditions and main cause of human rights violations. It furthermore reflects a theological poverty and betrayal of the reformed tradition.

On the contrary we need to admit that many decisions of the church extolled certain aspects of apartheid policy and even sought the acceptable implementation of apartheid legislation.

4.2.4 Group Areas and Homeland Policy

The Synod of the DRMC initially dealt with the question of the Group Areas Act for the first time in 1954. Whilst it is true that many members and congregations suffered first hand the horrible results of this policy (in forced removals, lost of places of worship, denial of ownership rights, etc), the decisions of synod reflects a

lack of depth and understanding of this injustice. In addition there is also an incomprehensible absence of decision and resistance against this policy.

Under the leadership of white missionaries the DRCA viewed the homeland policy as an acceptable alternative to the negative results of migrant labour (Acts of Synod 1971, p 342 point 1). The standing commission on Liaison with the Authorities were instructed to negotiate with the authorities with respect to the shortage of housing in urban and rural "Bantu" residential areas (Regional Synod OFS 1975).

Only with the emergence of indigenous leadership with the church and the breaking of the influence of the white missionaries did one detect greater clarity and urgency in the criticism of this policy on synod level. The first clear cut decision rejecting this policy is noted in the minutes of 1978. In 1982 the DRMC called for the repeal of the Group Areas Act. In the meantime a large percentage of the members of the church suffered under these laws and communities were uprooted to the benefit of others.

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4.5 Migrant Labour

The members of the former DRCA were primarily effected by laws in this regard. Once again the church basically kept silent in this regard. In 1971 the church even noted with gratitude the what the authorities were doing with regard to housing and amenities for migrant workers and the establishment of border industries. It is only in 1983 that the church declared this practice to be in conflict with the norms of Scripture and formulated a principle decision against it (refer Acts of General Synod 1983 p 116 - 121 and 360 - 361). This matter was once again tabled at the Synods of 1987 (Acts of Synod 1987 p 39 point 6.2 1) and 1991 (Acts of Synod 1991 p 44 point 6.12).

Despite the decisions of synod and especially in view of the suffering of the members of the church it must be acknowledged that the church did not materially take the lead in resisting this policy. Often the church only directed representations to the authorities whilst at the same time continuing to minister as best it could to migrant workers. Whilst structural and emotional violence was being committed against members, especially in the destruction of home and family life, the church sought to negotiate specific cases with the authorities. In essence it must be recognized that the church, though it may have spoken to an extent, did nothing while the rights of its members were being violated.

4.6 Mixed marriages

Once again the fact emerges that the church did not in general and consequently reject the prohibition of mixed marriages. Hereby the church contributed to the implementation of this act with all its negative affects. Furthermore he church, in line with this apartheid policy, dealt with the different race departments in the appointment of marriage officers. Only after decisions in 1978 and 1982 did the church negotiate the appointment of marriage officers for all races. Little reference is found in the decisions of the church outright rejecting the Immorality Act. In 1987 the General Synod of the DRCA noted with gratitude the repealing of this act.

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In the meantime local churches and pastors resisted this act by confirming "mixed marriages" without the legal recognition and in other cases legally but by ignoring "legal" requirements. These couples were counselled by the church in the difficult circumstances they found themselves in.

4.7 The Apartheid War: Chaplain Services

The security forces, namely the SA Police, SA Army, in main was responsible for "offensive and defensive" actions in "defense" of apartheid against the onslaught of "terrorism, communism and the anti- Christ" against SA. In the course of the war and the development of the total onslaught strategy, the SA government initiated the "winning of hearts and minds" principle as part of this strategy. The Christian Cultural Organisations, funded from secret government funds is one example in this regard.

In addition to prescribed and overt actions of the security forces, low intensity warfare followed. The strategies and actions were never declared beforehand and covert actions became the order of the day. a Sizeable amount of submissions on gross human rights violations before the TRC relates directly to this development.

The justification and motivation of forces in these actions relied on the a moral and spiritual undergirding as a means of preparedness the forces. The chaplaincy services of both the SA Police and the SA Army became the means of attaining this. The idea of the "holy war" within the context of the total onslaught became operative.

Although individual members of the synods opposed the idea of participation in the chaplains service, the church continued to avail ministers for this service. Through this act the church participated in this "holy war" and even blessed it. It did not resist it neither guided its members in opposing it. Thus the church contributed to gross human rights violations, polarisation and indescribable suffering and grief.

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The church furthermore vicariously acknowledges its part, in the involvement of its members, in the implementation, maintenance and defence of unjust laws by the security forces through gross human rights violations.

4.8 Apartheid Structures

The institution of apartheid structures on local, regional, homeland and national (town councils, management councils, Coloured Representative Council, Tricameral system, Presidents Council, Homeland Governments) levels, in its own way left a blemish on the history of the church. Decisions of the church in this regard was often ambiguous and members and clergy at different times participated in these structures.

5. FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO PRINCIPLES OF FAITH OPPOSING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The submission in this subsection relates to 1.4 above.

5.1 The URCSA cannot claim sole responsibility for its insights on what is normative in our declaration of faith and the moral and ethical implications thereof. The URCSA is rooted in the reformed tradition. This tradition boasts the fact that Scripture alone is normative for teaching and living. In Jesus Christ God con-firmed the dignity of humankind. Through Christ' life, death and resurrection God reconciled humankind with Himself and each other by breaking down the walls of division, destroying enmity and establishing peace. (Ephesians 2: 14 - 16).

5.2 Further defined, this church strongly relies on the Calvinist doctrine on church-state relationships. This doctrine clearly teaches the responsibility of the church, as institution and its individual members.

Calvin teaches that God through Jesus Christ reign supreme. Within this theological perspective the state is servant of God to the benefit of its subjects.

The state is burdened with the responsibility to restrict licentiousness, restrain chaos and fight evil. In this sense the state is servant of God. To enable the

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state in its task it is invested with the sword as means of effecting the authority of its calling (Roman 13). in contrast, the state that diverts from this calling is described as the beast that acts in contravention of its mandate. Calvin, in view of

his understanding of Scripture, was convinced that resistance against the unjust state and tyranny is not only justified, but through faith, an obligation.

5.3 The failure to denounce, resist and incite to resist apartheid and its resulting violations of human rights, constitutes the failure of the church to live up to its faith convictions. Rather the church often got caught up in its debates on the legitimacy and right of resistance against the authorities. These debates were dominated by the question of the violence and the armed struggle. This furthermore happened under circumstances in which our members were part of the armed wings of the liberation movements.

What is more, is that the church found it difficult to be practical with regards to its decisions. Many decisions were taken but with no challenge to action of its members followed. In the main the church's voice in this regard was relatively quiet before 1980. The church was not effective in curbing the violence suffered by its members. By speaking but not acting the church contributed to the high level of violence significant of this period. The church was not an efficient instrument of justice and change.

5.4 In the failure of the structures of the church to give the necessary support to the youth and the suffering, other members did so in their personal capacities. For this they deserve recognition and honour.

5.5 The church also failed to lend guidance and support to members of organisations, i.e. the UDF. Although some presbyteries came out in support, the church missed the opportunity to give positive guidance.

5.6 Yes, the church did object to violations of human rights, but in many cases by means of watered down or inadequate and contradictory decisions i.e. the chaplain's services. Often this constituted lip service with no actions. Some time the church remained silent and so betrayed its obedience to the Word of God and its own confessions.

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6. CONFESSION OF GUILT AND PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS

The URCSA, in the light of 4 and 5 above wishes to use the opportunity

(a) in view of acts of commission or omission to consequently oppose human rights violations;

(b) in view of its subtle recognition of the illegitimate apartheid regime through liaison, representation and negotiation;

(c) in view of its silence and conscious and unconscious lack of clarity in word and deed to confess unreservedly its and, vicariously, its members', guilt.

We herewith plead for the forgiveness of our fellow citizens and the Supreme, Triune God.

7. DECISIONS AND ACTIONS IN RESISTANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

This subsection (refer 1.5 above) pays attention to:

(a) theological perspectives underlying our decisions and actions;

(b) the struggle within and of the church

(c) The ecumenical context, influence and reciprocity in the church's resistance.

This presentation is not chronological but seeks to portray in spirit the context against which the church's actions must be understood. Although (a) - (c) is presented separately, it needs to be borne in mind that they are interrelated and interdependent.

We do not boast, neither are we haughty in presenting our actions for scrutiny. Even while we confess gratitude to the Lord for some of our decisions and actions we simultaneously acknowledge our weaknesses in this part of our submission.

7.1 Theological perspectives

Our failure to live by the principles of faith opposing human rights violations needs to be balanced against a short exposition of theological perspectives underlying our resistance.

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The emergence of the contextual theology had a predominant influence on the life and witness of the church. Essentially this development reiterated the imperative of the indivisibility of word and deed. Generic expressions of contextual theology in the form of black theology (also related to black consciousness) and the Latin-American liberation theology had a marked impact on the church.

These theological developments was central to the reflection on the essence of being church (ecclesiological); the recognition and confession of God as the God of the poor, oppressed and suffering (theology); the social, political and economic implications of Gods liberating acts through Jesus Christ (doctrine of salvation) and the calling of the church to be partners in God's liberating mission through is praxis of liberation and the opposition to injustice (missiology).

The acid test in doctrine and life is grounded in the preparedness of the church to obey God and to suffered as a result of said obedience.

Three particular moments representative hereof are:

7.1.1 The letter of Dr AA Boesak to minister A Schlebusch on 24th August 1979 in response to the scathing attack of the minister on the SACC's call to civil disobedience. In his letter Dr Boesak amongst other state: " What is the gospel of Jesus Christ the church is called to proclaim? It is the message of the salvation of God come to humankind through Jesus Christ. It is the proclamation of the Kingdom, the reign of Christ. This salvation pertains to the healing of the whole person. It is not only intended for the " inner life", the soul of people. The Jesus proclaimed by the church, was not purely a spiritual being with spiritual qualities foreign to the reality of human existence. No, He was the Word incarnate, complete in human form, and His message of salvation is intended of the whole person in the sense of his/her whole humanity (my translation).

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7.1.2 The Confession of Belhar (1986) in which the following is confessed in articles 4 and 5:

" We believe that God has revealed ~If as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men; that in a world full of injustice and enmity He is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that He calls his Church to follow Him in this; that He brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that He frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that He supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;

Therefore, we reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only Head, the Church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the

authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence!"

7.1.3 The Kairos Document. This document is an ecumenical witness signed by many members of our church. The Kairos Document is a Biblical and theological comment on the political situation in SA. The authors of the document were of the considered opinion that a kairos moment has come in which a clear voice on the calling of the church must be heard. This was necessitated by the acute crisis of both oppressor and oppressed claiming loyalty to the same church. The Kairos Document starts with a critique of state theology. State Theology relies on the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It depends on the abuse of Romans 13 and affords godly authority and justification to the unjust state. This god is an idol that blesses and institutes the power and violence of the state.

Secondly it does a critique of Church Theology. Church Theology lacks social analysis. It expounds the virtues of reconciliation without concern for justice. The Kairos Document declares this theology a betrayal of the gospel in view of the irreconcilability of good and evil, God and the devil. There can be no reconciliation without repentance.

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Thirdly an exposition of a Prophetic Theology, based on social analysis and reflection on Scripture, follows. God is not neutral. He is the Liberator of the oppressed. Within the Christian tradition a tyrannical regime has no moral legitimacy. It is therefore illegitimate and cannot be reformed.

In its closing chapter the document challenges the church to action. From the point of view of God's solidarity with the oppressed the church is called to participate in the struggle against injustice. Church activities must be transformed to reflect God's liberating mission special campaigns must be launched, civil disobedience mobilised and counselling and guidance given. The follow-up to the Kairos Document, Road to Damascus, declares that solidarity in the struggle against injustice and the promotion of God's mission in this world is not optional.

7.2 The Struggle in and of the Church

7.2.1 Movements within the church

The extent to which the church reflected the contradictions of society (refer 3.4 above) was the main reason for the formation of certain movements within the church. These movements had as declared goals resistance against apartheid as

well as the transformation of the church through pressure. The following does not represent all facts and details apart from attempting to indicate the significance of this development.

7.2.1.1 The Christian Institute (CI)

Although the CI was not limited to the DRCA and the DRMC, it had significant influence on the education and social conscience of members and clergy. The CI was founded, after the Cottesloe Conference (1960) of the World Council of Church, under the leadership of Dr C17 Beyers Naude. It sought to serve God's justice under compulsion of Scripture. In 1977 the CI was banned and members of its leadership were placed under house arrest. This repression by the state gives some indication of the significance of the CI.

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7.2.1.2 The Confessing Circle

The Confessing Circle (Belydende Kring - BK), originally called the Broederkring, was constituted by black and white clergy, evangelists, church council members, and lay members. It set itself the goal of guiding and pressuring the church in the struggle against apartheid and attaining church unity. The role was fulfilled under circumstances in which the credibility of church leadership was questioned. As such the BK was often viewed as the authentic voice of the oppressed within the DRCA and DRMC.

Because of its opposition to apartheid, the members of the BK became victims of security legislation and were often made suspect within the church. The BK period represents both the struggle within and of the church that often led to tension with the official church.

Many clergy who were members of the BK had their financial subsidies revoked by and even declined financial assistance by the DRC. The BK hereby played an important role in the theological thinking and liberation concept of the church.

7.2.1.3 ABRECSA

The movement and philosophy of the BK found extension in the formation of the Association of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA) in 1981. Constituted by members of the black DRC, Presbyterians and Congregationalists a broad reformed forum was founded. It reflected on reformed faith and its implications in opposing apartheid within and outside the church.

7.2.2 The Struggle of the Church

The earliest reflection of the struggle against apartheid and violations of human rights is reflected in the founding of the separate churches in 1881. The first act of protest of the former DRMC against the formation of racially segregated

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church, and thus the embryo of the later apartheid with its violations of human rights, came in the form of a boycott. Twelve church were expected at the founding of the church in 1881. Only 6 representatives of 4 churches however constituted the meeting.

Subsequent actions, up to 1917 were directed at the constitutional prescripts of DRC influence within this church through its missionaries.

The next significant development, with all its weaknesses and contradictions and without distracting from its significance, came in 1948. One Reverend I D Morkel registered his protest against the equalisation of "blacks" and "coloureds" after the election of the National Party in 1948. He states the conviction that "coloureds" are culturally closer to whites. On 3rd September 1948 he convened a meeting in Crawford to consider means to oppose apartheid. The result of this event then resounded within the Presbytery of Wynberg of the DRC. It rejected the unbiblical implementation of forced apartheid which gives rise to discrimination against "coloureds" and so doing destroys Christlikeness amongst "coloureds"

During the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument on 16th December 1949, Rev I D Morkel called a day of prayer in supplication that the Lord deliver the land from the affliction of apartheid.

During the discussion on the evaluation of apartheid in 1950, the church decided that such discussion will only lead the church into the labyrinth of political discussion. This decision led to Morkel's and 26 members of his church council's severance of ties with the DRMC and the formation of the Calvin Protestant Church.

With the scrapping of restrictive rules in the constitution of the DRMC, this church became "independent" in 1961. This event marked the beginning of independent thinking and actions by this church.

At the same time, the DRCA that existed as four independent synods, in May 1963 came together in the formation of one General Synod. This development

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was important for the emergence of a national identity and the expression of unified resistance against apartheid.

It however took another 17 years for the DRMC to oppose apartheid with greater conviction and worked more pointedly for the democratisation of SA.

This period was introduced in both the former churches by the events of the early and middle seventies. We deem it necessary, without repeating more substantive submissions in this regard, to shortly list events of this period:

The period sees the emergence of black consciousness in the political, including student political, arena. Some of the main protagonist were the Black People's Convention (BPC) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO), the Association for the Educational and Cultural Development for Africans (ASSECA), etc.

The extension of apartheid institutions and cooption of blacks;

Labour actions by means of the uprisings and strikes of 1973-74;

The independence of Mozambique with the resulting rekindling of the hope and expectation for liberation in SA. This hope was clearly expressed in the Pro-Frelimo Rallies;

The most important of these were however the 1976 student uprising.

The members of the former churches, primarily as students, were at the centre of historical events. They took the lead on many campuses and schools. On the campus of the University of the Western Cape for instance, theological students (i.e. LA Appies, HR Botman, P Gelderbloem) played a leading role in the SRC. The collective youth and student revolt resulted in expulsions, detentions (i.e. L A Appies, P Gelderbloem and many others), going into exile, conviction and imprisonment (i.e. L Seleka, L Courtries, Rudolph Knight convicted of sabotage and imprisoned on Robben Island), the disruption of the academic future of many and the death of others.

These events particularly gave impetus to the church's formal and informal resistance against violations of human rights

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During the 1978 synod, the church declared the church and political situation, a dispensation in which irreconcilability is being elevated to the level societal norm. Despite so called good intentions, the greed and prejudice of the powerful and privileged is entrenched at the expense of the powerless and underprivileged. The church further declared that this policy of irreconcilability leads to polarisation and conflict. This conflict is then used as an alibi to maintain the separation of people at all cost.

The church concludes that apartheid is a pseudo-religious as well as political policy. It affects church and state. It influences and structurally determines SA society as a whole.

These decisions formed the basis of the church's contribution to the decisions of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in 1982. WARC decided that the apartheid situation constitutes a status confessionis and the theological justification of apartheid is a heresy. In the same year the Synod adopted the decisions of WARC.

Related to the formerly mentioned decisions the church drafted and adopted the Confession of Belhar as concept pending ratification and official adoption in 1986. This is significant because related to the struggle against apartheid the first confession from the soil of Africa was born. The Confession of Belhar was ratified and adopted in 1986 (refer Addendum A - The Confession of Belhar (1986) and the Accompanying Letter). The confession was viewed as a full fledged confession, equal in status to the other confessions of the church. The adoption of this confession represents an important correction in the misuse of the reformed tradition to justify apartheid. It represents a historical moment in the church's return to the reformed tradition.

The decisions, rejecting apartheid and opposing human rights violations, of Synod in 1978, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1986, 1987 is broadly listed below.

Rejection, as unchristian, of detention without trial (Article 10 of the Internal Security Act);

Any ideology elevating state security above human rights is totally objectionable;

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Doing justice guarantees state security;

The lifting of house arrest amongst others of Dr CF Beyers Naude;

Rejection of influx controls;

Rejection of the homeland policies;

Rejection of the Group Areas Act;

The unbanning of the liberation movements (ANC PAC and SA Communist Party);

A critique of apartheid education;

Ministry to refugees;

Dialogue with the liberation movements;

The pastoral care of members in the liberation am-lies;

A critique of and demand for the lifting of the State of Emergency, 1985 and 1986.

7.2.3 Ecumenism

7.2.3.1 The URCSA, with reference to the DRCA and DRMC, did not act in isolation. Close ties exist between the decisions and actions of the church and that of the national and international ecumenical movement. Membership of the SACC, its Regional Councils, the World Alliance of Reformed Church, the WCC (since 1991) and ecumenical partnerships with churches in the USA and Europe is point in case. Many decisions and actions of these bodies stood at the centre of rejection of apartheid and the demand for the restoration of human rights.

Dr A A Boesak, President of the WARC (1982), Moderator of the DRMC (1986) and founding member of the UDF (1983) played a key role in ensuring that apartheid and human rights violations remain in sharp focus nationally and internationally.

The following list broadly and very shortly reflects the ecumenical context of the church's rejection of apartheid and opposition to violations of human rights:

The isolation of the Apartheid regime;

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Sanctions, disinvestment and divestment; Economic and other boycotts.

7.2.3.2 Actions within the SACC and Regional Council context that justifies mentioning are:

The Convocation of Churches and prayer for the fall of the apartheid government;

The Standing for the Truth Campaign;

The 1988 March on Parliament.

7.2.3.3 The following list reflects the nature and character of resistance within the WARC context. The church was instrumental in many of these decisions:

1964 - that apartheid constitutes a betrayal of the Gospel;

1970 - that racism is ungodly and any church justifying it can no longer be viewed as an authentic member of the body of Christ;

1982 - that the ideals and practice of apartheid is in conflict to God's promise of peace, justice and liberation.

In the last mentioned case, WARC during its General Assembly in 1982, decided that the situation of apartheid constitutes a status confessionis (a state of confession in which it is no longer possible to differ on the question without serious jeopardizing the Gospel). Furthermore it declared that the persistent theological justification of apartheid is a heresy (a doctrinal view that is at variance with the recognized, established and official doctrine of a church). These events became the basis of the decisions of Synod in 1982 and the adoption of the Confession of Belhar (refer 7.2.2).

The results of the church's struggle against apartheid led to the persecution of the officers and members of the church and the violation of their human rights. The church's theological standpoints and rejection of apartheid inspired the actions of individuals and led to the detention of amongst others: Reverends P Moatse and KE Leputu (detained the same evening after a debate on

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apartheid in the regional Synod of Northern Transvaal in 1986); Dr A A Boesak (at that time vice chairperson of the Synod of the DRMC); reverends L Mabusela, L M Matsaung, E M Tema, elder N J Matlakane, reverends A Beukes, H R Botman, J D Buys (together with the injection of a chemical substance into his car in Oudtshoorn), J de Waal (who, shortly after the Trojan Horse event near Cape Town, partially lost sight in one eye after a baton attack by the police); E Leeuw, B Leuvenink, R J Stevens, J Thyse, A J Visagie (whose home was also damaged in a firebomb attack).

We wish to state that this list only represents limited examples and is in no way complete. This subsection also does not relate incidents of attacks, assaults, restrictions, intimidation, short term arrest and interrogation, break ins, making suspect and breach of privacy through intercepting post and telephone tapping, as directed at officers and members of the church.

The growing resistance, inside and outside the church, against conscription, with special reference to chaplaincy, inspired clergy and members to become religious objectors. Their refusal to do service led to convictions and sentencing to community service. We shortly list persons like reverends D Potgieter, B Nel, N Theron, C Krause and brother B de Lange.

8. THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION

We are of the opinion that the following actions may contribute reconciliation in our land:

8.1 Church Actions with a view to reconciliation

Pastoral counselling of victims and perpetrators aimed at confession of guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation and bringing the involved parties to public acts of reconciliation; Development of reconciliation liturgies transforming worship into acts of reconciliation; Reconciliation services for local, regional and national groups;

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Development of rehabilitation programmes holistically seeking the renewal of perpetrators.

8.2 Theological/Religious Community Statement, memorial and collective visioning

The formulation of a profound theological/religious community statement. In addition the Christian denominations/religious community can erect a memorial in remembrance of martyrs and as a reminder that such violations of human rights should never be allowed to happen again.

The implementation of a process of collective visioning. The aim of such visioning is a broad based ownership of a vision of a new nation and renewed and transformed community. The vision should inform policy and strategy development and implementation.

8.3 An annual national week of reconciliation

An annual national week of reconciliation can be instituted. The following public symbolic acts of reconciliation can be considered:

the presentation of a report of a civil audit and social comment on the part of, progress in and promotion of human rights by the authorities, followed by a policy declaration (manifesto) of intent by the state;

Vicarious confessions of guilt by political parties and the security forces with symbolic acts of restitution (i.e. the initiation or participation in community projects);

A national service or meeting in remembrance of human rights violations and public commitment to the promotion and maintenance of human rights;

development of symbols of reconciliation as a sign of the will and the taking up of civil responsibility for the promotion and defence of human rights as well as the prevention of and resistance against human rights violations;

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the burning of candles in windows and the wearing or display of national reconciliation symbols.

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Presented on behalf of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa on instruction of the Executive Committee at its meeting held in Bloemfontein on

16th - 17th July 1997.

Signed

James Buys

Moderator - General Synod