

IT HAPPENS UNDER APARTHEID... AND UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION: DETENTION AND TORTURE OF CHILDREN

South Africa: Youth are a main target of the apartheid police and army in their ongoing arbitrary harassment, arrest and torture. In 1985, 25,000 persons were arrested and 10,000 detained; 25% of them were children. Other estimates indicate that two-thirds of detainees in the same year were under 18 years of age. Investigation shows that most detainees are mistreated; many are tortured severely - some to the point of death. In 1985, 16 persons died in police custody and one in detention, many of them young people. We take only one example of the apartheid regime's crimes against African children as was reported in *Sechaba*, April 1986: Eleven year old Fanie Kuduku spent 57 days in solitary confinement, despite two court hearings to secure his release. He was subsequently acquitted of charges of public violence, but he is now in hiding, for the police who assaulted him during his detention still constantly hound him.

Occupied Palestine: Israeli Military Order no. 132, applied in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, allows for the arrest of Palestinians as young as 12 years old. Those under 15 must be held separately from other prisoners,

«unless the military commander ordered otherwise.» As one example, nine out of ten youth in Duheisheh camp near Bethlehem, in the West Bank, have been arrested since the 1967 occupation. Specifically for quelling youth activism, the Zionist occupation authorities opened Al Fara'a Detention Center near Nablus. Since 1982, hundreds of West Bank youth have been snatched from their homes or off the streets, incarcerated in Al Fara'a, beaten and otherwise tortured to extract confessions to some alleged 'crime' of resisting occupation. One child who has been doubly victimized is Mohammad Abu Wardeh, 12 years old, who lives in Balata refugee camp near Nablus. He was held for 18 days at Al Fara'a in 1985, and interrogated brutally about books which soldiers found in the room he shares with his elder brothers. In February, he spoke out about his torture at a press conference in Jerusalem organized by the Committee Confronting the Iron Fist. Afterwards Israeli soldiers repeatedly raided his home, rearresting two of his older brothers, as punishment for Mohammad's public testimony about Zionist crimes (*Al Fajr*, May 16, 1986).

The movement has ever more clearly asserted its adherence to the ANC, which gives mass action broader scope as part of the ANC's carefully defined strategy for liberation. Another highly significant development came with last year's formation of COSATU as the largest and most representative workers' movement in the history of South Africa. Its alliance with the United Democratic Front and with SACTU (the banned trade union federation affiliated to the ANC) meant a great boost in the role of the working class in the anti-apartheid struggle.

Bolstered by better organization and clearly defined political aims, the current mass uprising, which dates back to 1984, has not only withstood repression, but has created new realities. Starting last year, a number of Black townships became no-go zones where the regime's forces venture only in large military convoys. Local structures are being built, which are embryonic forms of people's power, and coordinated with parallel structures in other areas.

CHANGING TIMES

A few years ago, US imperialism was counting on the racist South African regime to just plain liquidate the ANC. Pretoria drew strength from the Reagan Administration's policy for exporting counterrevolution, and it escalated aggression against the African masses and neighboring states. Today, due to the advancing liberation struggle led by the ANC, support to Pretoria has become a problem for the imperialists. They are forced to ask themselves: Can we save both our interests and this system of apartheid which has historically watched over them for us? Thus, we see something approaching a political crisis in Britain, due to Thatcher's resistance to sanctions, while the Reagan Administration has found it necessary to reappraise its attitude toward the ANC. This is, of course, a political maneuver designed to ward off real liberation for the South African masses, but the ANC is well-equipped to deal with such maneuvers. Most of all, it shows the changing reality brought about by mass unity and militancy, revolutionary leadership and persistent armed struggle.

MASS PERSISTENCE

Despite the extent of fascist repression, the struggle for freedom is ongoing, though we are prevented from learning all its details. Soweto Day was marked by a general strike which was 90% effective in several major centers. News trickling through the apartheid censorship's iron curtain indicates that daily confrontations continue between the regime's forces and the people in many areas. In this round, the Black trade union movement has placed itself firmly in the frontlines of the anti-apartheid struggle. Since Soweto Day, there has been a series of strikes demanding the release of detained trade union officials, an end to the state of emergency and to apartheid as such. At one point, four diamond mines and a gold mine shaft were halted for several days running, showing the trade unions' potential to strike at the heart of the racists' and imperialists' interests. The first ten days of July saw 200,000 workers on strike, culminating in mass protests. Attacks in the vital urban centers of apartheid expose the regime's failure to halt the revolutionary armed struggle waged by the ANC.

Reports indicate that mass organizations are still functioning, though in great secrecy. Relying on many years of

experience, especially that of last year's state of emergency, many political activists were expecting the regime's onslaught. Many avoided detention and are able to move among their people, organizing and coordinating the struggle.

The ability of the masses and revolutionaries to persist in their struggle is due to a set of factors that have emerged clearly over the past few years. The 1981 movement, protesting the regime's celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Republic of South Africa, marked the readiness of broader sections of the masses to engage in radical, united struggle to challenge state power. There was massive involvement of the so-called colored population in the anti-apartheid struggle, while the Indian community rejected the puppet council created for keeping 'coloreds' and Indians down, but just above the majority Black population, in order to perpetuate white minority rule.

Growing popular unity paved the way for the creation of the United Democratic Front which brings together local groups representing every sector of the people who suffer from apartheid. The student movement, which played a radical, pioneering role a decade ago, is now part of a much broader and sustained mass movement.

