

## SOUTH AFRICA

ISSUE: Human Rights Situation in South Africa

BACKGROUND:

Apartheid in South Africa is a system of institutionalized racism that is reflected in every aspect of life - social, cultural, political and economic.

As a result of the mounting toll caused by internal and external pressure, the South African Government under the new leadership of President de Klerk appears to have finally recognized that it must somehow involve blacks in the national political process. To this end, however, de Klerk has only put forward vague reformist proposals, still rooted in the concept of "group rights" that appear to preserve the entrenched power of the white minority in South Africa.

The new government of de Klerk has taken some encouraging steps in recent months, but they have been more symbolic than substantive. The basic pillars of apartheid, such as the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Land Act, segregated education and health care, the homelands system and, above all, the denial of the vote to the black majority are still intact.

Detention of individuals under the Internal Security Act and the State of Emergency have declined since the end of August, and the South African Government has begun to remove restrictions on some of those released from detention or prison. However, many people still remain detained, imprisoned and restricted, and the Government has at its disposal the Internal Security Act, the Public Safety Act as well as the State of Emergency to continue to restrict the black opposition.

The abhorrent and pervasive nature of apartheid continues to be reflected in civil violence in Natal, continued bannings and restrictions of individuals and groups, intimidation of the press, harassment of development, human rights, union and church groups, political abductions and assassinations.

Most South Africans are victims of the apartheid system. Many South African women, however, face additional hardships. The lack of employment opportunities and housing shortages in the "homelands" force thousands of men to reside away from their