

PM-COMMONWEALTH-WITNESS; 0425
WITH PM-COMMONWEALTH-AFRICA

BY DENNIS PASSA

CANBERRA (CP) - MAX COLEMAN IS A WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN WHO DARES TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST APARTHEID.

HE SAYS HIS RESISTANCE TO HIS GOVERNMENT'S RACIAL POLICIES WAS PASSIVE UNTIL 1981 WHEN HIS SON KEITH; CO-EDITOR OF A STUDENT NEWSPAPER; WAS DETAINED FOR FIVE MONTHS BY GOVERNMENT FORCES AND THEN RELEASED WITHOUT CHARGE.

"THE DETENTION OF A FAMILY MEMBER IS A HIGHLY POLITICIZING PROCESS," COLEMAN; A JOHANNESBURG RESIDENT; SAID TODAY AFTER APPEARING AS A SPECIAL WITNESS AT THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS ON SOUTHERN AFRICA.

COLEMAN; A CHEMICAL ENGINEER; AND HIS WIFE AUDREY FOUNDED THE DETAINEES' PARENTS SUPPORT COMMITTEE. SINCE THAT TIME; MORE THAN 40,000 SOUTH AFRICANS HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED WITHOUT TRIAL - INCLUDING COLEMAN'S SECOND SON NEIL.

COLEMAN NOW WORKS WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION IN SOUTH AFRICA AND IS IN A GOOD POSITION TO GAUGE THE EFFECTS THAT TRADE AND FINANCIAL SANCTIONS ARE HAVING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

"TEN YEARS OR 10 MONTHS - ONLY INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE CAN DETERMINE HOW MUCH LONGER APARTHEID CONTINUES IN SOUTH AFRICA," HE SAID.

"WHAT WE ARE SAYING IS THAT MAXIMUM PRESSURE MUST BE PLACED IF APARTHEID IS TO BE WIPED OUT. RIGHT NOW; WE (SOUTH AFRICA) ARE DYING OF CAPITAL STARVATION."

COLEMAN SAID IT IS IMPORTANT FOR BANKS AND MAJOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO DO AS LITTLE BUSINESS AS POSSIBLE WITH HIS COUNTRY.

CAPITAL OUTFLOW

"SANCTIONS HAVE MADE AN IMPACT IN SOUTH AFRICA. THERE IS AN ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THERE HAS BEEN A HUGE OUTFLOW OF CAPITAL."

MOST RECENTLY; COLEMAN HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO A SPECIAL BOARD ESTABLISHED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES TO INVESTIGATE "INFORMAL REPRESSION;" PARTICULARLY ATTACKS ON ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISTS SUCH AS THE RECENT ASSASSINATION OF DAVID WEBSTER; COLEMAN'S CLOSE FRIEND AND FORMER DETAINEES' PARENTS SUPPORT COMMITTEE MEMBER.

ANOTHER SOUTH AFRICAN SCHEDULED TO APPEAR AS A WITNESS TODAY - AZHAR CACHALIA; A LAWYER AND TREASURER OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT - WAS REFUSED A PASSPORT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

THE FRONT IS SOUTH AFRICA'S LARGEST ANTI-APARTHEID COALITION WITH ABOUT TWO MILLION MEMBERS.

"HE HAD JUST BEEN ON A TOUR TO SPEAK WITH; AMONG OTHERS; U.S. PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH AND (BRITISH PRIME MINISTER) MARGARET THATCHER; SO I GUESS THEY DIDN'T WANT TO LET HIM LOOSE ON THE COMMONWEALTH MEETING," COLEMAN SAID.

APARTHEID IS SOUTH AFRICA'S POLICIES THAT ENABLE THE WHITE MINORITY TO CONTROL MOST ASPECTS OF THE COUNTRY WHILE DENYING THE BLACK MAJORITY OF BASIC RIGHTS AND SEGREGATING THE POPULATION ACCORDING TO RACE.

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