

Photo: IDAF

*COSATU launch, Cape Town, 1986*

## ***R*esistance and repression**

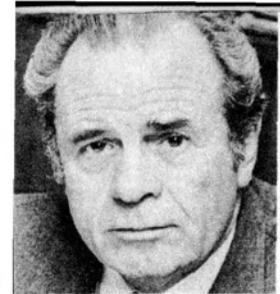
The Trade Union Movement in South Africa

**Saturday, 24th February 1990.**

University of London Union, Malet St, WC1.

10am–5pm.

A one-day education and campaign conference.



"Since I participated in a delegation to South Africa in 1986, the trade union movement has blossomed into one of the leading forces for democratic change in that country.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has more than doubled in size since its founding congress in 1985. With the United Democratic Front, it is a central organiser of the mass defiance campaign, which has shaken the apartheid regime to its very foundations. There is also growing co-operation between COSATU, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and other trade union organisations to oppose the apartheid system.

Since the imposition of the State of Emergency in 1986 the democratic trade union movement has shouldered the brunt of the attacks by the apartheid regime against the Mass Democratic Movement.

These attacks have taken various forms. Direct attacks on union leaders and activists by security forces. Detention and imprisonment. The ransacking and destruction of union buildings. The use of vigilantes to murder union activists. The use of racist courts.

The trade union movement in South Africa needs our solidarity now in the face of these attacks. International action *does work*. Under auspices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement's *Joint Campaign* and in co-operation with the TUC, British trade unions have successfully campaigned for the release of **Moses Mayekiso**, *General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa*, trade union stalwarts **Oscar Mpetsha** and **Harry Gwala**, and SWAPO *Secretary of Labour* **Jason Angula** and helped to stop the execution of eight trade unionists.

*But much more needs to be done.* Trade unionists remain under the threat of repression as long as the apartheid system exists. That is why this conference has been convened – to strengthen our campaigning. Please make every effort to ensure that your branch is represented at this very important conference. //

Ron Todd, President of the Joint Campaign

The 'Resistance and Repression' Conference has been convened to –

- publicise the role of the non-racial trade union movement in resisting apartheid;
- expose and highlight the attacks on the trade union movement in South Africa;
- intensify the campaign against the repression of trade unionists in South Africa;
- mobilise solidarity for the non-racial democratic trade union movement and the national liberation movement as a whole.

The release of Walter Sisulu, Oscar Mpetsha and other stalwarts of the anti-apartheid struggle in October 1989 was a great victory. But South Africa remains an imprisoned society. There are over seven hundred political prisoners in apartheid jails including many trade unionists. Amongst the sixty-seven opponents of apartheid on death row, there are five trade unionists.

When trade unionists have been released from imprisonment or detention many have faced severe restrictions and curfews which makes it impossible for them to carry out their union duties and liable to attack by state backed vigilantes and death squads.

The British government claims to seek a negotiated settlement to the political crisis in South Africa. But it steadfastly refuses to intervene in most cases where trade unionists are being repressed. The Organisation of African Unity has stated that the apartheid regime has to take steps to create the climate for negotiations in South Africa. Amongst these steps are:

- The release of all political prisoners and detainees unconditionally and to refrain from imposing restrictions on them;
- Lift all bans and restrictions on all proscribed organisations and persons;
- End the state of emergency and repeal all legislation, such as, and including the Internal Security Act, designed to circumscribe political activity;
- Cease all political trials and executions.

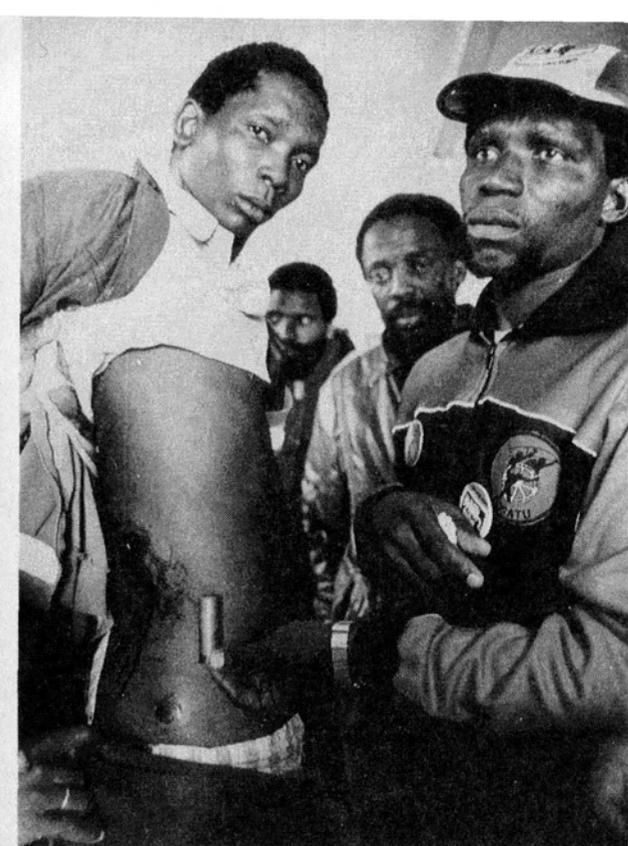


Photo: IDAF

Miner shot in an attempt to break NUM strike, 1987

The conference has been organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement's *Joint Campaign*. It will include senior speakers from the British and South African trade union movements. The *Joint Campaign* is supported by the following unions:

ACTT · AEU · ASLEF · BETA · BFAWU · BIFU · COHSE · CPSA · EIS · FBU · FDA · FTAT · GMB · HVA · IRSF · ISTC · MSF · MU · NALGO · NAPO · NAS/UWT · NATFHE · NCU · NGA · NUCPS · NUFLAT · NUM · NUPE · NUR · NUS · NUT · NUTGW · SOGAT 82 · STE · TGWU · TSSA · UCATT · UCW · USDAW.

The *Joint Campaign Against the Repression of Trade Unionists in South Africa and Namibia* was established in 1987 by the AAM's trade union committee and Southern Africa the Imprisoned Society (SATIS). It has successfully campaigned on a number of cases where trade unionists faced repression in South Africa and Namibia.

**A** one-day mobilising conference for delegates from trade union organisations and other interested bodies to promote campaigning against the repression of trade unionists under apartheid.

## Agenda

**Chair** Barbara Switzer, *Executive Committee AAM*

10.00–10.30 **Registration**

10.30–11.45 **Plenary**

- Ron Todd, *General Secretary TGWU*
- A guest speaker from *The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)*

11.45–13.00 **Educational workshops**

- 1 Trade unions and the struggle against apartheid – a historical perspective.
- 2 The apartheid state's offensive against COSATU and the non-racial trade union movement.
- 3 Trade union struggles in the mines.
- 4 Workers' rights and conditions.
- 5 Organising on the farms and in rural areas.
- 6 Womens' role in the non-racial trade union movement.

13.00–14.00 Lunch.

14.00–15.30 **Campaign workshops** on the theme 'Stop the Repression of Trade Unionists' with specific focus as indicated –

- 1 Trade unionists on death row.
- 2 Trade unionists in prison.
- 3 Trade unionists in detention and restricted.
- 4 Trade unionists on trial.
- 5 The repression of women trade unionists.
- 6 General.

15.30–15.45 Tea.

15.45–16.30 **Report back** from campaign workshops.

**Final speeches –**

- The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).
  - The Anti-Apartheid Movement.
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# Registration Form

- We wish to attend the *'Resistance and Repression'* Conference.
- Name of trade union and branch/organisation/local AA Group \_\_\_\_\_
- Registration fee: £5 per delegate.
- Name(s) of delegates**  
(Maximum 3 per organisation)
1. \_\_\_\_\_ Tel no. \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address** (for documentation) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Tel no. \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address** (for documentation) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Tel no. \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address** (for documentation) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A creche will be available. If you wish to take advantage of this facility, please indicate the number of children and their ages:
- Number of children \_\_\_\_\_ Aged \_\_\_\_\_
- There is disabled access. Please tick if required.
- Registration fee enclosed                      £ \_\_\_\_\_  
Donation    £ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total    £ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Cheques, postal orders etc. should be made payable to the Anti-Apartheid Movement).

The conference is run on a delegate basis and is likely to be over subscribed. Please register early to ensure your organisation's attendance. Conference credentials, documents and papers will be sent in advance to all delegates who register by **Friday, 16th February**.

Please return as soon as possible to:  
The Trade Union Secretary, Anti-Apartheid Movement,  
13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. 01-387 7966.