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WOMEN'S NATIONAL COALITION

Suite 3609 • Carlton Office Towers • Commissioner Street, Johannesburg • 2001
 P.O. Box 62319 • Marshalltown • 2107 • Tel: (011) 331 5958/9 • Fax: (011) 331 5957

Fax Form

To: Ms STELLA CAMERON / NATIONAL PARTY

From: Priscilla / PRCUS.

Date: 11/08/93 Receiver's Fax No.: 397-2211

No. Of Pages (including this one): 5
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Message: DEAR STELLA, PLEASE RECEIVE THIS CONTRIBUTION
 ON THE ISSUES OF VIOLENCE + THE PEACE KEEPING
 FORCE. WE APOLOGISE FOR THE POOR QUALITY OF EARLIER
 DOCUMENTS. HOPE YOU WILL FIND IT USEFUL. REGARDS. PRISCILLA.

Convenor: Frene Ginwala • Co-Convenor: Anne Letsebe • Sec Gen: Thoko Msane
 Dep. Sec Gen: Sandra Botha • Co-Treasurers: Miriam Stein; Jennifer Kinghorn

COMMENTS ON TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE VERSION 4; VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (REVISED) VERSION OF 27 JULY 1993

At the outset it is important to clarify the limits of the mandate of the committee viz "only (to) those issues of gender and women which have a bearing on violence during the period when the MPNF exists."

The committee makes a distinction between criminal violence against women and political violence against women. The latter is described as violence for "political gain" on the grounds that "the victims gender is demonstrably relevant to (1) the means of harm and (2) the end of political gain". The examples given to illustrate political violence against women are pornography and specific attacks against women as loci of informal political influence. Women are also said to be suffering political violence in that they suffer the greatest impact of the political violence on society (ie sole surviving breadwinners).

The committee considers these issues to primarily go to the issue of equality and therefor to fall in the realm of constitutional law which goes beyond the terms of reference of the committee. The committee summarised its position at 4.2.1, 4.2.2 & 4.2.3.

I wish to raise the following questions and comments:

1. Can we accept that all violence against women, given the systemic nature and endemic levels thereof, keep women in a subordinated position in society, preventing them from equal participation in society?
2. Can we accept that keeping women subordinated and preventing their equal participation in society is a "political gain"?
3. Which constituency enjoys this "political gain"?
4. Just because the root cause of the violence or the beneficiaries of the "political gain" is not party political does that render the violence non-political or criminal?
5. The brief of the committee is surely not limited to acts of party political violence, but to all violence which undermines free and fair elections and peace during transition.

6. We accept the limited powers of the committee. However, we propose that the committee recognise and acknowledge unequivocally all forms of violence against women in society. We further propose that the committee condemn it in the strongest possible and most public terms.

Furthermore we propose that the ongoing violence against women and its debilitating effect on women's free and equal participation in the election period to be highlighted for the purpose of other technical committees to be taken into consideration at all levels of the MPNF and all programmes, structures and forums which result therefrom.

7. We strongly challenge in particular the reluctance to make any recommendations regarding women's increased participation in the National Peace Accord and Goldstone Commission. It would be useful to obtain empirical evidence with regards to the levels of women's participation in these structures as it is our submission that women's participation has been negligible.

8. Attached also find a memorandum with regards to women's participation in a National Peace Keeping Force.

Ilze Olckers

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RE: WOMEN'S DESK COMMENT ON REPRESENTATIONS ON ROLE OF NATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

In terms of our representations the principal objective of the NPKF would be to "defuse tension and provide a peaceful environment in order to ensure free political space for parties to conduct their election campaigns." (p16) The NPKF would also be expected to take appropriate measures, including minimum force, if necessary.

We also propose a 50/50 division between existing Security Force infrastructures and INDIVIDUALS recruited from MK et al. (p22)

I have the following questions and comments:

- 1 If we rely on existing infrastructures including MK, we will of necessity be excluding almost all women as there are very few women MK cadres and certainly fewer still active women in the SDU.
- 2 It does not seem as if all members of the NPKF have to have had formal combatant training as the principal objective of defusing tension requires qualitatively different skills.
- 3 Surely the "free political space" for all "political parties" to conduct election campaigns also extends to citizens to freely participate in the elections process. In many women's experiences the formal right to equal participation means nothing without some special enabling and safeguarding measures. Couldn't it be argued that the role of the NPKF should be extended to include the facilitation and monitoring of such measures. In this regard in particular it would be important to have women Peace-Keepers. Is it, for example, too far-fetched to imagine members of the NPKF providing child care facilities at political meetings?
- 4 It is submitted that the levels of women's participation in the peace process and in the NPKF leaves much to be desired. Isn't it of the utmost symbolic (if nothing else) value to have the NPKF represent and mirror the society it is to serve?

5 Women are well known for their pragmatic and peace-keeping attributes. Their mere presence can also often decrease the chances of a potentially violent situation erupting. Many women have displayed their courage, monitoring and dispute resolution skills as members of the Network of Independent Monitors; as marshals of political parties; as members of the Black Sash and various church organisations and other community based and non-governmental organisations.

6 It is unfortunately, however, not only as peace-keepers that women survive in the daily violence of the townships, but also as real protagonists. Ref: Weekly Mail 16-22 July 1993. Their role is often to support and inspire the men to engage in violent acts. It could be argued that, by incorporating women into the NPKF, this active role that women play in sustaining the violence could be better understood and more effectively addressed.

FROM: Ilze