

WHY I REFUSE TO SERVE IN THE RACIST SADF



In July David Bruce was sentenced to six years jail for refusing to serve in the SADF. "I'm not a pacifist", he said, shortly before his trial. "I'm prepared to serve in defence of the people of this country, but not in defence of a racist system". Shortly after David Bruce's stand on conscription, the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was restricted. PHAMBILI prints some of his motivations for refusing to serve in defence of a racist system.

DAVID BRUCE MOTIVATION

1. My reasons for refusing to serve in the South African Defence Force are based on my understanding of the situation in South Africa and my own political and moral convictions which revolve around my opposition to racism.
2. South Africa is a deeply divided country which faces the possibility of an intensifying war. While some South Africans and especially those in positions of authority in this country would have us believe that it is a war being conducted by South Africans against an external threat I have little doubt in my own mind that it is essentially a civil war which is being conducted by those seeking to

defend the privileged position of a minority of South Africans against the legitimate aspirations and demands of the majority of people in this country.

3. This system of privilege which is being defended in South Africa is based fundamentally on racism. While racism was only fully entrenched within the South African political system with the coming to power of the national Party in 1948 and their implementation of the policy of apartheid, the apartheid system itself represents only a modification of policies which were implemented by successive South African governments following the achievement of union in 1910.

4. In recent years the South African government has in important ways sought to modify the political system within this country. However it remains essentially racist in character and the government has through its actions indicated firstly that it intends to dictate by force the terms on which any settlement is reached and secondly that entrenched white privilege and domination are in its terms the precondition for any settlement.

5. At present the SADF plays a pivotal role in maintaining this racist system. This is evident from:

- the role which it plays in the regional war in South Africa
- its involvement in suppressing civil unrest internally
- its key role in the Joint Management Centres and the National Security Management System

6. While the latter two examples point most directly to the fact that the SADF is in essence involved in a civil war i.e. that it is involved in suppressing internal resistance to the apartheid system, the first example is perhaps the most controversial as it is in relation to the regional war in Southern Africa that the SADF and the South African government base their claim that they are in fact defending South Africa against an external threat rather than conducting a civil war.

7. In looking at this question I think it is important to emphasise that the SADF has been involved in a variety of activities across a spectrum which has included armed raids into neighbouring countries, destabilisation activities and all out war in the countries surrounding South Africa - Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Angola. Furthermore it has now for some time served as an army of occupation in Namibia, contrary to the will of the majority of Namibians.