



Apartheid Debt & Reparations Campaign Media Statement

EMBARGO: 11h00 (South Africa) Tuesday, 12 November 2002

Major Apartheid Reparations Suit Filed in US Court

After four years of failed attempts to get multinational banks and businesses that propped up the apartheid state to account for their odious profiteering, the Khulumani Support Group and Jubilee South Africa's Apartheid Debt & Reparations Campaign today announced that a major complaint for apartheid reparations was filed last night in the New York Eastern District Court on behalf of victims of state-sanctioned torture, murder, rape, arbitrary detention, and inhumane treatment.

"The corporations aided and abetted a crime against humanity whose persistent social damage requires urgent repair," Jubilee South Africa said in a statement issued today.

"They made massive profits while the suffering of the victims of apartheid intensified. The banks and businesses have consistently ignored our attempts to engage in discussion about their role in supporting broad social programmes for the reconstruction and development of affected communities and in compensating specific individuals for the damage that the corporations made possible."

Thandi Shezi, one of the claimants from the Khulumani Support Group, said: "Today we lay claim to our right to redress from the banks and businesses that enabled gross violations of our human rights."

"This is the only route left open to us to ensure that the truth is known about the extent of corporate complicity in apartheid abuses and that justice is delivered to those who suffered. The victims cannot be left to pay for their own suffering. Multinational corporations must be put on notice that complicity in crimes against humanity does not pay," said the Khulumani Support Group.

The Apartheid Debt & Reparations Campaign, in consultation with its international partner campaigns, instructed its lawyers, Michael Hausfeld (USA) and Charles Abrahams (SA), to file the legal complaint in the United States of America on behalf of the Khulumani Support Group, a coalition partner organisation in Jubilee SA. Khulumani is an organisation of about thirty-two thousand victims of gross apartheid human rights violations.

The complaint names eight banks and twelve oil, transport, communications technology, and armaments companies from Germany, Switzerland, Britain, the United States, Netherlands, and France, calling on them to contribute towards healing the damage caused by their profiteering from apartheid by paying compensation to the victims and reparations that will be used for reconstruction and development programmes.

The Apartheid Debt & Reparations Campaign said: "In this claim, we express our commitment to the future of apartheid's victims, to the protection of human rights, and to the rule of law".

“This suit has been filed after extensive international consideration of its legal and factual basis, and after thorough consultation amongst key organisations. Further complaints of similar weight in regard to other aspects of apartheid crimes will be filed in coming months.”

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Note:

- The full text of the filed complaint is available on the website <http://www.cmht.com> from 12h00 (South Africa) on Tuesday, 12 November 2000.
- The text of the complaint will include brief descriptions of the human rights violations and damages suffered by each of the named plaintiffs.