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SOUTHERN AFRICA SPECIALIST SAYS MANY PROBLEMS REMAIN DESPITE RECENT CHANGES INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

PHILADELPHIA -- South Africa is trying to maintain its economic stranglehold on Namibia and other southern African countries and still supports destabilizing military forces in the region despite seemingly dramatic political moves in the Republic of South Africa itself, an American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) specialist declared today.

Carole Collins, just back from four years as AFSC's Southern Africa International Affairs Representative, added that "Despite recent encouraging moves by South African President F.W. de Klerk, there is still a striking lack of real change in policies at the level of the white minority government. It still hopes to preserve white privilege.

"Job segregation and housing discrimination remain in place for South Africa's Black majority. Blacks still cannot vote for, or against, or choose the people who rule them."

She said the unbanning of Black political groups and the release of Black leader Nelson Mandela were significant steps forward in meeting preconditions for meaningful negotiations to end apartheid, but that de Klerk "has not touched the basic structures of apartheid. He has not lifted the State of Emergency. He has not extended unconditional amnesty to all political prisoners."

She noted rising violence by South African-supported anti-government forces in Angola and Mozambique and fears of potential violence by South African-linked groups in Namibia as that country nears its March 21st Independence Day. Angola and Mozambique are among the Frontline States bordering South Africa. Many are domestically dependent on the Republic, although nine countries are working to reduce that dependency through SADCC (Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference).

Carole Collins said that among most troubling matters in the region are South African efforts to strip Namibia of resources -- from

(MORE)
tin roofs carted off in trucks to public employee pension funds privatized last October -- when Namibia urgently needs assistance to reconstruct schools and houses destroyed during a decades-long liberation war.

"Private banks and western businessmen are using changes in eastern Europe to discredit the idea of socialism and state economic intervention in Africa. Some are pushing for more privatization of state-run services and enterprises," Carole Collins said.

"But," she added, "in countries with little local capital and few entrepreneurs with significant managerial training or experience, privatization may concentrate the economy in even fewer hands and increase economic burdens on poor and working people. Privatization is also the major tool South Africa is using in Namibia to reduce the economic resources and leverage available to the Black-led government coming to power March 21, and to retain those resources in white hands.

"As western countries direct more aid to eastern Europe, many in the southern Africa region fear they will be left with little resources to cope with a large refugee burden, plus reconstruction of social services and economic infrastructure damaged by South Africa's regional destabilization actions.

"Malawi hosts more than 820,000 Mozambicans displaced by the war," Carole Collins said. "But relief officials told me they are not getting the quick response they expected to their appeals for assistance for next year."

Events in eastern Europe have stimulated discussion in the region on the wisdom of one-party states, she said, adding that "However, many I talked with are not convinced that allowing many political parties will lead always to greater social peace and democracy. They point to the 'white-on-white' ethnic violence in eastern Europe and the USSR and tell me that multiplying parties will sharpen ethnic and tribal tensions in their own countries."

Carole Collins has travelled extensively in the southern Africa region (most recently in Namibia, Malawi, and Mozambique), talking with community and church leaders, government officials, liberation groups and others. She visited Namibia last month, on the eve of its independence, from her base in Harare, Zimbabwe, and also has visited Angola, Lesotho, Zambia, and Botswana. She has also worked extensively with women's and co-operative movements in the region.

The AFSC, a Quaker organization, see each life as sacred, each person as a child of God.

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