

# Claim 7: Freedom and Democracy

**That there are fewer civil liberties in the rest of Africa than in South Africa: that the South African press is 'the freest in Africa' and that South Africa is a developing multi-party democracy contrasting favourably with single-party states elsewhere in Africa..**

## **The Facts**

(a) Countries in the rest of Africa do not have racial statutes which deny or confer civil rights on the basis of skin colour, nor prohibitions against multiracial dwelling-areas and movement between cities without state permit, and few countries in Africa, even in military-ruled or one-party states, approach South Africa's authoritarian network of repressive measures against dissent, freedom of opinion and freedom of speech.

(b) The South African press is not the freest in Africa. Few African countries can rival the number or severity of governmental measures against publications and individual journalists (bannings, imprisonment without trial) — apart from the 27 laws in South Africa which limit freedom to publish, and the many extra-legal measures against journalists who publish material which significantly embarrasses the South African government abroad or is regarded as subversive of its authority within the country.

(c) South Africa claims to be a multi-party democracy but behind the trappings of multi-party toleration it is in effect a one party state. Three-quarters of its national population is disfranchised and the remaining officially-enfranchised quarter can in practice only elect Afrikaner nationalist governments. Even within the all-white electorate, a vote in the predominantly Afrikaner nationalist areas of the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Cape Province is weighted to be worth 1.4 votes in the English-speaking areas. As Afrikaners outnumber English-speaking whites by almost two to one, they have in consequence nearly three times the voting power. Furthermore, even if the Afrikaner nationalist vote split, the powers vested under the previous constitution (and even more so under the new constitution) would enable the governing party's leader to retain military, civil and administrative control.

Therefore the elections and by-elections held among the white community are not elections as they are understood in democratic countries. This is one of the reasons why there has been no change of administration in South Africa in 36 years. When the

last real challenge to government policy within the white parliamentary system was mounted by a group of dissenting senators in 1954, Premier Strijdom simply legislated to create enough extra senators to outvote the objectors.

**Conclusion    In terms of civil liberties, South Africa's record is poor even in regard to whites, and even on matters unrelated to race.**