Tuesday 23 August: 270 in detention
Wednesday 24 August: Six more people are taken to John Vorster Square. Five are Wits students. Tom Waspe and Gavin Evans are released after a few hours questioning. Darryl Glaser and Rob Whitecross after four days detention. Karl Niehaus (a 2nd year student and Christian youth worker) and Jansie Lourens (a school teacher) are still being detained. Ordinary people.

Karl and Jansie are being held under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act which allows for indefinite detention, and denies access to lawyers or family. While some are quick to brand them as subversive, we should bear in mind that of the 261 detained in 1982, 177 were released without charge, and 20 more were acquitted.

Section 29, based on the recommendations of the Rabie Commission, is the 'reformed' face of the old Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. It shows that nothing has changed: laws are still as arbitrary as before, detainees still as defenceless. It's a neat package: superficial reform concealing heavy handed repression.

We are told that a 'yes' vote in the Referendum is a vote for 'civilised standards' and 'freedom through justice'. Is this the justice we want?

Detention Fact Sheet No 1
Some facts and figures
28 August 1983: 272 people presently detained

Regional breakdown
23 in Transvaal
8 in Natal
4 in Port Elizabeth
82 in Ciskei (plus another 24 from the Charles Sebe coup)
11 in Transkei

Monthly breakdown (including homelands)
January: 16
February: 9
March: 37 (18)*
April: 9 (4)
May: 27 (6)
June: 27 (11)
July: 67 (46)*
August: 80 (50) + 26 schoolchildren in Vryberg, just charged
* figures in brackets refer to the number of homeland detainees included in the first figure

Detainers: mainly July, August

Occupational breakdown
1. Students, scholars, academics, teachers: 45 (+26 Vryburgers)
2. Trade Unionists, workers: 57
3. Community and political leaders: 27
4. Church people: 5
5. Journalists: 3

Comparison: 1982
Total detained: 267 (93)
177 released without charge
20 acquitted

Occupational breakdown:
Students etc: 117
Trade Unionists and workers: 30
Community and political leaders: 17
Church workers: 11

Comparison 1981:
772

Deaths 1983:
Simon Tembuvise Mdawwe died: 7 March place: Nelspruit
cause of death: 'suicide by hanging', Already 'condemned' by security police as 'trained terrorist'

These two deaths bring the total to 55.

Detention Fact Sheet No 2
A Tortuous Business

In April 1982, a memorandum prepared by the Detainees' Parents Support committee claimed that systematic and widespread methods of torture were employed by the Security Police during the interrogation of detainees.

70 statements from ex-detainees were submitted to the Minister of Law and Order in which various forms of torture, intimidation and pressure are alleged:

The DPSC findings are reproduced in summarised form below:

- 20 cases of sleep deprivation;
- 28 cases of enforced standing for long periods, and enforced physical exercise and exertion;
- 25 cases of being kept naked during interrogation;
- 11 cases of suspension in mid-air;
- 54 cases of beating, slapping, kicking etc;
- 22 cases of electric shock torture;
- 14 cases of attacks on genitals;

Various forms of psychological torture and intimidation are also alleged:

These include:
- Threats to kill or detain children, parents, wives or close friends of the detainees;
- Threats of being dropped from a high building, or simulation of being held or thrown out of a window.

Many detainees also complain of actions deliberately designed to humiliate, degrade or break them. For example, the denial of toilet facilities, apart from physical discomfort, has a humiliating effect especially when the detainee is no longer able to contain himself/herself and is then compelled to clean up the room.

In addition to the physical injuries resulting from assault, many detainees complain about longer term psychiatric effects. Authorities have often found it necessary to hospitalise detainees, and several detainees have required medical attention on their release.

The DPSC concludes that 'the modifications and safeguards introduced after the recommendations of the Rabie Commission afford no real protection for the detainees caught up in the system of security legislation'. DPSC declares: 'Only the abolition of all detention related security legislation can end the widespread horror of secret interrogation removed from public and judicial security.'