

31 March 2009 - 16h00

PRESS RELEASE: SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND TO ACCOUNT FOR ITS FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICY WITH APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA BETWEEN 1948 - 1994

1. CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES – MS YASMIN SOOKA (FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUBILEE SOUTH AFRICA), MS MARJORIE JOBSON (KHULUMANI SUPPORT GROUP) AND MR JODY KOLLAPEN (CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION) ARE MEETING WITH MR RUDOLF BAERFUSS, THE SWISS AMBASSADOR IN PRETORIA THIS AFTERNOON AT 15H00

2. THE DELEGATION HANDED THE SWISS AMBASSADOR A MEMORANDUM CALLING ON THE SWISS GOVERNMENT TO RESPOND TO A RESEARCH REPORT (THE 'KREIS REPORT') IT COMMISSIONED IN 2002 TO INVESTIGATE SWITZERLAND'S FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICY - A COPY OF THIS MEMORANDUM WAS PROVIDED TO THE SWISS EMBASSY ON 24 MARCH 09 AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT AT THE VERY LEAST A PRELIMINARY RESPONSE WILL HAVE BEEN DRAFTED

3. THE SWISS GOVERNMENT IN 2001 CLAIMED IT WAS COMMISSIONING THIS RESEARCH TO FACILITATE 'FACTUAL CLARIFICATION' ABOUT SWISS – SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS DURING THE APARTHEID PERIOD. THERE ARE CONCERNS AS TO THE SINCERITY OF THIS CLAIM AS THE SWISS GOVERNMENT SHUT DOWN ACCESS TO ITS OWN ARCHIVES FOR ITS OWN RESEARCH TEAM, CLAIMING THAT IT DID NOT WANT TO PREJUDICE SWISS COMPANIES FACING CIVIL ACTION FROM KHULUMANI AND OTHERS IN THE US COURTS. THIS OBVIOUSLY TEMPERED WHAT COULD BE DETERMINED BY THE RESEARCH

4. DESPITE THESE RESTRICTIONS, THE KREIS REPORT WAS RELEASED IN OCTOBER 2005. IT'S FINDINGS CONFIRMED THAT SWITZERLAND'S FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICY, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO FINANCIAL EXPORTS, GOLD, WEAPONS DEALING AND SANCTIONS BUSTING, GAVE CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT TO THE APARTHEID GOVERNMENT, AND THAT THIS SUPPORT INTENSIFIED DURING THE 1980S DURING THE PERIOD OF GREATEST REPRESSION.

5. THE SWISS GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLICLY REFUSED TO RESPOND TO THE FINDINGS OF THE KREIS REPORT WITHOUT PROVIDING SUBSTANTIVE REASONS FOR THIS.

6. SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS CALL ON THE SWISS GOVERNMENT TO MAKE GOOD ON ITS UNDERTAKING TO SECURE FACTUAL CLARIFICATION BY ENGAGING THE REPORT AND OPENING UP ITS ARCHIVES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH. IT CALLS ON THE SWISS GOVERNMENT TO AFFIRM ITS SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TO SECURE REMEDY FROM THOSE WHO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE VIOLATIONS AND FOR THOSE WHOSE SUPPORT UNDERWROTE THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT THAT MADE SUCH ABUSES POSSIBLE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEETING AND THIS INITIATIVE PLEASE CONTACT:

MS. YASMIN SOOKA – 084 911 5020

MS. MARJORIE JOBSON – 082 268 0223

MR. JODY KOLLAPEN – 083 265 3611

A COPY OF THE MEMORANDUM HANDED TO THE SWISS AMBASSADOR IS AVAILABLE FROM www.khulumani.net

A NOTE FOR THE PRESS ON SWISS – SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS IN THE APARTHEID ERA – CALLING ON THE SWISS GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT - IS AVAILABLE FROM www.khulumani.net