

Thursday, 14 November 2002

Amani Trust Declared Illegal According to Zimbabwe Government Minister

Herald Reporter

THE British-funded Amani Trust is operating illegally in Zimbabwe since it is not registered under the Private Voluntary Organisations Act.

The Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Cde July Moyo, told Parliament yesterday that the organisation had only registered its constitution with the Deeds Registry Office.

"Amani Trust is one of the NGOs to which my ministry gave notice in the Press on 13 September 2002 to stop their operations until they have regularised their registrations," said Cde Moyo.

"I would like to end by reminding these organisations that failure to adhere to the law will result in arrests being made."

Cde Moyo was responding to a question by Makoni West MP, Cde Gibson Munyoro (Zanu-PF) on why Amani Trust continued to operate when it was obvious that it was more political than developmental.

Cde Moyo said the Government would deal strongly with NGOs that took advantage of registering with the Deeds Registry Office to further political agendas.

Last month President Mugabe announced that the Government would scrutinise NGOs and review the policy and laws governing them.

The Government has accused the British government of working with NGOs such as Amani Trust in clandestine operations to unseat it and President Mugabe.

Amani Trust was originally established to provide community-based care for the survivors of torture and violence.

In the run-up to the March presidential poll, the organisation funded safe houses set up by the opposition MDC as hideouts for its members on the police wanted list for political violence.

The trust established the safe houses under the guise of providing shelter to victims of political violence.

But investigations revealed that the occupants were being used to carry out special assignments for the MDC and the National Constitutional Assembly

such as participating in anti-Government demonstrations and opposition rallies and meetings.

The occupants were also being used to catalogue cases of political violence as part of a dossier that was being compiled by the MDC to justify the intervention of Britain, the United States and the European Union in Zimbabwe's politics.

Amani Trust and other anti-Government NGOs have also been on a crusade to demonise Zimbabwe at major summits by presenting false reports on political violence.

In August its director, Dr Frances Lovemore, was arrested for releasing a false report alleging that national youth service graduates, war veterans and some policemen were wantonly gang-raping young girls.

Last month, the British High Commission gave about \$3,6 million to the trust.

Dr Lovemore confirmed to a group of New York City councillors on a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe that her organisation was indeed being funded by Britain.

She also confirmed that her organisation received a cheque of \$3,6 million from the British High Commission.

In a related issue, Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Cde Patrick Chinamasa, yesterday released a list of NGOs threatening peace and security in Zimbabwe.

Cde Chinamasa was responding to Mutare North MP, Mr Giles Mutsekwa (MDC) who wanted to know the organisations involved in such activities.

Cde Chinamasa made the response on behalf of the Minister of State for National Security, Cde Nicholas Goche.

The organisations named were Westminster Foundation for Democracy of Britain, the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform, Amani Trust, Help, the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust and the Southern African Media Development Fund.

"These NGOs come under the guise of strengthening civil society," said Cde Chinamasa.

"We have a plethora of both foreign and local NGOs that disguise their activities in semantics such as human rights, democracy and promoting civil society."

Cde Chinamasa said most of these organisations were foreign-funded and their aim was to destabilise the nation.

He said the Westminster Foundation had received about \$6 million from the British Government, while representatives from the three major political parties in Britain sat on its board.

"It has been involved in over 80 projects for the MDC and helped plan its election strategy," said Cde Chinamasa.

"Against this background, it will be naïve to believe that these organisations are impartial. But not all NGOs are involved in subversive actions. We would like to see all NGOs keeping out of politics."

Cde Chinamasa dismissed a recent report by the United Nations linking some Zimbabwean officials to the plunder of wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He said the contents of the report were not factual since enemies of Zimbabwe seeking to demonise the country drafted it.

"The so-called UN report is a lot of rubbish and is propaganda directed at Zimbabwe," said Cde Chinamasa.

"Our conduct in the DRC was above board and right-thinking people are happy that we prevented genocide."

"We have no time to waste clearing malicious reports. The allegations are unfounded and we know the source. It is the British and the United States who were trying to chase us from the DRC so that they can continue to plunder the country as they did under the rule of Mobutu."

Cde Chinamasa was responding to a question by Mr Mutsekwa on the response of the Government to the report.