

CAPE TOWN DECLARATION ON PSYCHIATRIC ASSAULT FINALLY SIGNED

A GROUNDBREAKING declaration calling for an end to all forced and coerced psychiatric procedures and for the development of alternatives to psychiatry was signed at Cape Town's Robben Island Gateway in a ceremony held last week, Monday, March 24. Members of MindFreedom International and local and international psychrights activists gathered to witness the historic occasion in which Mary Maddock, founder of MindFreedom Ireland, handed over the document to Moosa Salie of the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

The declaration recognizes South Africa's contribution to the struggle and the need to eliminate all forms of torture and coerced treatment. A spokesperson said: "South Africa has an admirable Bill of Rights, especially article 12 which grants all citizens the right to security in and control of the body, as well as bodily and psychological integrity", but he cautioned against being too upbeat about current legislation, "although South Africa has ratified the UN convention on the Rights of the Disabled which includes all those given psychiatric labels, notions such as self-ownership and the right to refuse treatment have yet to be incorporated in national legislation.

"We renew our fight today, against discrimination, injustice and for human rights in order to empower and improve the quality of life for those considered different or maladjusted, and others marginalized and disadvantaged by society, including those labeled with psychiatric disorders," declares the groundbreaking document which follows on last year's Declaration of Dresden opposing the use of forced electroshock, also known as Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT) which is increasingly being used in poor and developing countries. As more countries develop psychiatric services there is a significant increase in involuntary hospitalizations, forced treatment and drugging to conform to the so-called biomedical model of human behaviour.

MindFreedom made news headlines when it assisted psychiatric patients fleeing detention in the United States under laws that have resulted in the incarceration of people with different religious and political beliefs. The Declaration also follows last week's ISAD conference in the city, sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry.

The Cape Town Declaration received an official endorsement from the African Decade on Disability and was circulated at last years HIV and Disability Conference held in Johannesburg 2007.

More Information: Moosa Salie 07824865953 0215115776

The Cape Town Declaration

We, the undersigned,

- 1) Noting the ongoing global emergency in mental health, do hereby affirm the June 2007 Declaration of Dresden*, by standing united in calling for an end to all forced and coerced psychiatric procedures and for the development of alternatives to psychiatry and;
- 2) Recognising the Republic of South Africa's contribution to mental health particularly its Bill of Rights article 12, which grants all its citizens, the right to security in and control of the body, as well as bodily and psychological integrity, and;
- 3) Cognisant of the innate fallibility of the human mind and the falsifiability of science including, theories, ideas and medical practices, and reaffirming our commitment to the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Disabled;

Do hereby affirm our common humanity and heritage in Africa , to be recognized as persons endowed with consciousness and in possession of body, mind and spirit.

Call upon South Africa and member states of the UN to ratify the UN Convention, and for *self-ownership* and the *right to refuse treatment* to be recognized and affirmed by national and provincial legislation.

Renew our fight today, against discrimination, injustice and for human rights in order to empower and improve the quality of life for those considered different or maladjusted, and others marginalized and disadvantaged by society, including those labeled with psychiatric disorders.

Commit ourselves to the values of acceptance, self-determination, non-violence, respect of individuality and belief in the intrinsic worth and dignity of every human being.

Demand, before the eyes of the community, and for all the peoples of the world, as well as ourselves; social justice, equal rights and a free and therapeutic environment, safe from torture, detention and coercive psychiatric intervention of all kinds.

We therefore join hands with our fellow activists and comrades in the broader movement for social justice, in order to embrace forgiveness and healing and to say, never again will one race dominate another, nor will our mentality or beliefs be used to oppress fellow human beings – only truth and justice can set us free.

SIGNED ON THIS DATE ROB BEN ISLAND GATEWAY,
CAPE TOWN, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA