

JASA

Justice Alliance of South Africa

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NEWSLETTER NO 1 OCTOBER 2007

*Please note our website is now up and running at www.jasa.za.net
(Special thanks to Gil Marsden and Darryl Schoeman)*

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Parliamentary Submissions

Abortion:

JASA took the lead, certainly amongst the pro-life groups in Cape Town, in proposing the changes we should press for in the 2007 Abortion Amendment Bill which is designed to replace the Bill struck down in the Constitutional Court as a result of John Smyth’s and Adv Kemp’s efforts under the Doctors for Life banner.

The good news: Responding to the Court’s judgement, all the Provincial Parliaments held public hearings, some a large number in different towns. The public overwhelmingly and unequivocally showed its dislike for abortion, and several of the key reforms JASA orchestrated support for were recommended by the Provinces, in particular a conscientious objection clause and new provisions protecting minors.

The bad news: The NCOP refused to allow the Provinces to propose these amendments and thereby turned the whole process of public involvement into a sham. We believe this is a ground for an attack on the new Bill in the Constitutional Court, should it become law.

Executive Board

Tim Makamu (Chairman), Stephen van Rhyn (Vice-Chairman), Tendai Musikavanu,
Nigel Desmond, Roger Gifford, John Smyth

Exciting prospect for next year: We wait now to see whether the National Assembly will hold proper public hearings. It is rumoured they won't, which would provide a second and even more powerful ground for approaching the Con Court.

On-line Gambling:

JASA made both written and oral submissions opposing this extension of our already liberal gambling laws. John Smyth presented the oral submission to the National Assembly Committee.

Child Discipline: JASA takes the lead in both process and substance

Following a written submission presented by JASA, we were given no opportunity to make oral submissions. No public hearing was scheduled for Cape Town and John Smyth was present at a Committee meeting in Parliament where the decision was taken to stick by that decision. JASA sprang into action. John wrote to both the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairman of the NCOP, introducing himself as the author of the Con Court case last year, and warning of the consequences which would follow a refusal to permit public involvement in a matter as controversial as removing the parental right to spanking children. The letter was released to the Media under a JASA statement, John was interviewed on SAFM, and after another very stormy Committee meeting, the decision in respect of a Cape Town public hearing was reversed. John spoke on two other radio programmes that week in August, and it certainly put us on the map and in the public eye for the first time. When the public hearing was held in September, our Chairman spoke at length to a very receptive Committee putting the emphasis on the vital importance of child and family discipline rather than corporal punishment. We await news of the outcome of those hearings.

Xhosa Traditional Circumcision

JASA was introduced by CMF to a young man in the Eastern Cape who felt strongly that as a committed Christian he should not subject himself to traditional circumcision. Instead, in response to his parents' wishes, he underwent medical circumcision at the local hospital. His father refused to accept that; several months later the student was woken at 4am by a gang of 10 community leaders who tied him up and subjected him to further circumcision. It is on any view an appalling case of a harassment, assault, breach of dignity and unfair discrimination which breaches the Bill of Rights in so many ways.

JASA has written to the Chiefs of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders and the Eastern Cape Congress of Traditional Leaders asking for an apology on behalf of the young man, and for an assurance that such conduct will never occur again to anyone else. Our letter makes it clear that JASA has no objection to male circumcision; the issue is solely one of human rights.

If no response is received by the end of October, we shall take further action beginning with publicising the matter to the media.

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DVD on Abortion in South Africa

At the beginning of September JASA responded to a request that John should do a half hour presentation on the state on abortion law in SA for mPower Ministries who produce high quality DVDs for Universities, schools, churches etc. The DVD will shortly be available with contributions from other speakers on the medical and ethical aspects of the debate. Copies may be obtained from contacts@mpowerministries.co.za.

Membership Growth and Funding

Without any soliciting, our membership is just short of 50. Please encourage others to join us. May we suggest you print out this Newsletter and give it to a friend. There is no subscription. But we do ask members to donate what they can preferably by regular monthly payment so we can budget.

We continue to be severely limited in what we could do in this vitally important field of work by lack of funds.

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