

ESTELLA HOUSE,
47a, MAIN ROAD,
CLAREMONT, Cape.

3rd August, 1960.

To: The Hon. F.C. Erasmus,
The Minister of Justice,
Union Buildings,
PRETORIA.

Dear Sir,

My organisation has been engaged, together with others in various parts of the country, in assisting in the alleviation of the distress of the families and dependents of detainees. One form that such assistance takes is organising and financing transport facilities whereby detainees' relatives are enabled to visit them to the extent permitted by the authorities acting in terms of the Emergency Regulations.

We have been gravely concerned to find that in many cases the relatives of detainees do not know where the latter are being held. In some instances, the prison authorities have even taken the attitude that the Emergency Regulations preclude their giving information to those concerned as to the whereabouts of a detainee. This attitude is not, however, general among officers commanding prisons, but even where they are prepared to give information, they can speak only as to the names of detainees actually under their control.

My organisation feels, however, as a matter of common humanity, that the next-of-kin or other close relatives of detainees should be informed of the whereabouts of the detainee and be notified of any changes in his place of detention. More particularly is there a need for this in cases being dealt with under Regulation 4 bis. Many of this class of detainee are minors - mere children - and we have been shocked and grieved at the distress of many of their parents, who have not been informed of the whereabouts of their sons and seem unable to discover where they are. Possibly an official letter to the Director of Prisons would ultimately elicit the desired information, but it is no doubt unnecessary to remind you that many of the people concerned cannot read or write and are in any event ignorant of the proper official quarter to which to address enquiries.

My organisation has no doubt, moreover, that you as Minister of Justice, share our view that it is essential, on grounds of general policy, that guardians should be kept informed as to the whereabouts of their wards, having regard to the fiduciary relationship in which they stand to them.

We earnestly and respectfully request you, therefore, to issue instructions to the appropriate officers of your Department to keep the next-of-kin of detainees promptly informed as to their places of detention.

M.C. PETERSEN.
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
THE BLACK SASH.