

APARTHEID KILLS

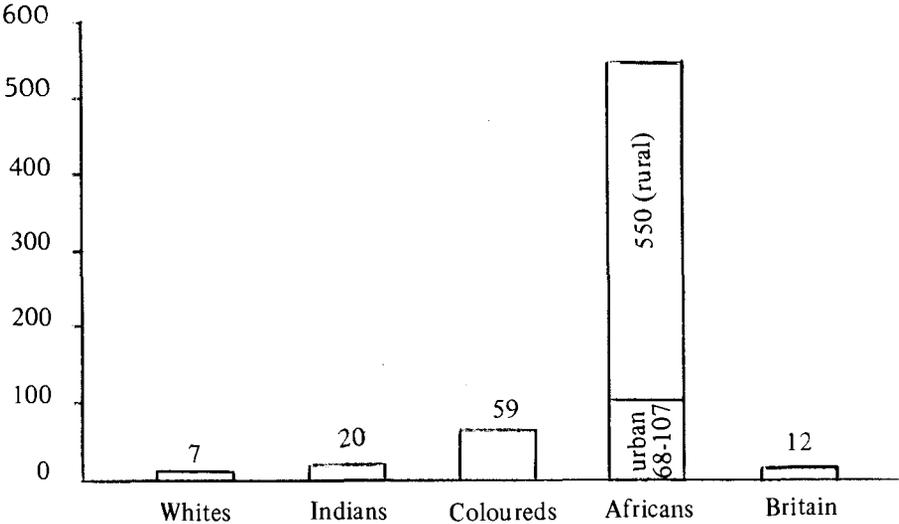
Starvation and disease are sweeping the length and breadth of South Africa – while whites enjoy one of the highest standards of health in the world, tens of thousands of black South Africans are dying every year from preventable diseases.

50,000 children die each year in South Africa from malnutrition and malnutrition-related diseases.

In the Ciskei, half of all two and three year olds are malnourished... In the Tsolo district of Transkei nearly 30 per cent of the children die from malnutrition before the age of two... In the area served by a Bophuthatswana hospital, 40 per cent of infant deaths were due to malnutrition... In Vendaland, 70 per cent of the adults have venereal disease... In a KwaZulu hospital, 75 per cent of children admitted have malnutrition as the primary diagnosis... Nearly half of 100,000 children admitted to Natal's major black hospital between 1970 and 1985 were seriously malnourished and over a quarter of these died.

The differences in the health of black and white South Africans can be seen from the infant mortality rate, ie the number of babies who die before their first birthday, per 1,000 live births.

Infant Mortality Rates per 1,000 live births



The apartheid regime does not collect national figures for Africans – figures are based on surveys in different parts of the country.

The poverty and appalling living conditions forced onto black people by apartheid are also responsible for their suffering from diseases on a huge scale. Diseases like tuberculosis, typhoid, cholera, polio and diphtheria are endemic. The incidence of tuberculosis increased by 22% between 1978 and 1983. In 1985 there were 54,489 new cases reported in South Africa; all but 660 were amongst blacks. Measles is usually a trivial infection, but in South Africa it kills more children in three days than it does in the United States in one year. Soweto has the highest recorded incidence of rheumatic fever in the world.

HEALTH CARE

The same inequalities exist in the provision of health care in South Africa. The entire health service is segregated, with separate hospitals, clinics and even ambulances for blacks and whites. The apartheid authorities are proud that black hospitals like Baragwanath have 'a tremendous variety of clinical material' where practically every disease noted in pathology textbooks can be seen by visiting 'experts'.

Racism in the health service is so entrenched that there are separate ambulances and blood banks – black patients receive 'black' blood and white patients 'white' blood.

There is one white doctor for every 330 whites, but only one African doctor for every 91,000 Africans; one white nurse for every 147 whites, and one African nurse for every 870 African patients. The apartheid regime provides whites with almost three times as many hospital beds per head of population than it does for blacks, and spends nearly three times as much on each white patient in hospital as it spends on each black patient.

In rural areas, where over 60 per cent of the African population live, the position is even worse. The apartheid regime has forcibly uprooted hundreds of thousands of people and dumped them in the bantustans, which are barren, overcrowded rural slums. In these death camps they call 'homelands', every day is a desperate struggle against starvation and disease. In QwaQwa in 1982 there were only two doctors for a population of 250,000 people. And the apartheid regime intends continuing its bantustan policy until all 'black spots' have been removed from 'white' South Africa. According to one apartheid minister, 'The basis on which the Bantu [African] is present in the White area is to sell their labour here and for nothing else.'

APARTHEID – THE ROOT CAUSE

Both these things – starvation and disease and grossly inadequate health care for the black majority – are directly due to the system of apartheid. The bantustans, the migrant labour system, the townships and resettlement camps, starvation wages and high (almost 40 per cent) unemployment, reinforced by a massive apparatus of repression – the whole apartheid system makes black South Africans into units of labour for the ‘white’ economy. These are responsible for the conditions of poverty, malnutrition and overcrowding in which blacks in South Africa live and which inevitably give rise to disease and disability.

Apartheid is a crime against humanity – it kills, it disables, it creates malnutrition and disease. It must be destroyed if all South Africans are to enjoy life and health.

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Support the work of the AAM Health Committee

For further information on how to get involved write to: **The Anti-Apartheid Health Committee, c/o AAM, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. Tel: 01-387 7966.**

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