

## Christian Radio voice silenced in South Africa

Good News Community Radio (GNCR) has been one of the longest running community radio stations in South Africa, broadcasting since 1995. Despite the petitions of over 100,000 listeners, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) has steadfastly refused to renew the broadcasting license for this popular family station. [See ITM June 2006]

The reason cited by ICASA for withdrawing the license for veteran GNCR (with an 11 year track record of award-winning educational and community programs) claimed it was “*not racially representative enough.*” However, GNCR had every racial grouping including Zulu and Indian in their station and on their board. However the other secular station to which ICASA awarded their frequency (98 FM) was only secular Zulus.

Apparently a multi-racial, multi-lingual radio station broadcasting in five languages, 24 hours a day, is not as “*racially representative*” as a station that, to this day, has yet to broadcast a single program, and which consists entirely of secular Zulus.

Prior to its closure, GNCR had faced on-going sabotage with regular, sometimes weekly, cable theft and electricity cuts, with electricity poles chopped down and burned at night. The GNCR staff noted that the power cuts were not accidental or coincidental. The timing was significant – just before court cases, when GNCR would

want to be communicating with their listeners.

When told in 1998 by a key government official that soon there would be “no Christian radio stations in the country,” over 10,000 Christians marched to Parliament in Cape Town to protest the plans to silence Christian community radio stations in South Africa. The ANC government backed off and reassured marchers that they would respect freedom of religion on the airwaves.

When GNCR’s 4-year license renewal came up for review, the same official (who is determined to shut down Christian radio stations) was on the committee which refused their license renewal. The Government turned a blind eye to this blatant conflict of interests.

The initial GNCR submission, which was rejected as “*not representative enough*”, included 27,000 signatures in support from members of the community. However, the secular Zulu station had only 500 signatures on their submission, all written on the same paper and in the same handwriting. “*It seemed to me that only 6 people wrote all their submissions. It was fraudulent,*” commented one observer.

Since the government closed down GNCR on June 30<sup>th</sup>, so that the secular station could take over, they have yet to use the 98 FM frequency on which GNCR had broadcast for over 11 years. The pledge to eradicate Christian community radio stations in South Africa is taking effect.

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