

Letter sent to 41 MPs on the Christian World Service database

9 November 2007

CA/6/g

«Name»

«address1»

«city» «postcode»

Re: Terrorism Suppression legislation and police operation

Dear «Salutation»

Christian World Service is writing to ask that you support the withdrawal of the Terrorism Suppression Amendment Bill in light of yesterday's announcement by the Solicitor General and also call for an independent inquiry into the surveillance operations under the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002.

Christian World Service was relieved that the Solicitor General decided not to press charges against the 16 people arrested under the Terrorism Suppression Act but was not surprised by his concerns around its application. In a media statement last month Christian World Service stated that the Terrorism Suppression Act was being used inappropriately on New Zealand citizens when we had been told that it was necessary for international reasons.

On two occasions Christian World Service has made submissions to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee questioning the definition of terrorism used and in particular raising concerns about the use of possibly inaccurate or contestable secret information concerning anyone charged under the Act. The way that the police have used this legislation for what we understand is extensive surveillance raises serious concerns about any future operations and how they might affect Maori and those actively involved in political, social and environmental issues in Aotearoa New Zealand. There is no way for those concerned to know if information concerning them has been picked up in this operation and it would seem only fair that all of the material now be destroyed.

Our concerns about what would happen to someone from overseas facing prosecution under the legislation remain. A foreign citizen would not have the protection offered by the Solicitor General and no access to evidence supplied by an overseas government or entity to the New Zealand government. The existing legislation could infringe on internationally sanctioned human rights and it is imperative that it be thoroughly and fairly reviewed.

Christian World Service is particularly troubled by police actions in Ruatoki and among Tuhoe. We note that Maori from within the church community and beyond have clearly stated that damage has been caused by this operation. We have had reports from church people who live and work among Tuhoe that give us serious grounds for concern. While we appreciate that the Police Commissioner did issue an apology we believe that the government also needs to offer a formal apology to the Tuhoe people and seek to restore relations.

It is important that we work to build a fair and just society in Aotearoa New Zealand where tangata whenua are respected and human rights upheld at a time when there is so much distrust and conflict in the world.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Southey