

# Boesak: 'Bid to discredit me'

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By MARTINE BARKER

DR Alan Boesak, patron of the United Democratic Front, has accused the authorities and the "supporters of apartheid" of conducting a campaign to discredit him by linking him with acts of violence in the country.

He has challenged them to accuse him of any such links in a court of law.

At an anti-election meeting at the University of the Western Cape yesterday, Dr Boesak said his stand on violence had long been on record. His resistance to the government was based on his commitment to non-violent democracy.

In an interview later, he said stating this view entailed "sticking his neck out" because

people in South Africa increasingly believed violence was the only way of achieving change.

He was not, however, prepared to enter a debate over the question of violence and would only offer two comments to the Labour Party and others who had called on him to clarify his stand:

● Of the 15 patrons of the UDF he was the only one being challenged. It was clear a campaign was being conducted against him specifically — critics of the UDF should approach other patrons for views as well.

● He was "sick and tired" of pro-government media linking him to acts of violence and of the accusations of UDF critics who were about to enter the new dispensation. He challenged them to accuse him in court.

Dr Boesak responded to claims from UDF critics that a failure by coloured and Indian voters to boycott the August elections would spell an end to the credibility of the UDF.

He said the UDF did not expect the boycott to prevent the government from setting up a tri-cameral Parliament. Rather, a boycott would show that the government claims of bringing non-whites into a democratic system were untrue.

Whatever assurances the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, might have given to European heads of state on his overseas trip last month were based on the expectation that the new constitution would be accepted and endorsed by coloured and Indian people. It had to be shown that this was not the case.

The August elections were not the end-point for the UDF — whatever the percentage poll, the organization would continue to exist and to fight for change even after the implementation of the new constitution.

Since its formation less than a year ago, the UDF had grown from having 400 affiliates to having over 640. The UDF now had an estimated 2.5-million members, said Dr Boesak.

(Report by M Barker, 77 Burg St, Cape Town)

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