

Refusing to serve

THIS IS an open letter to my fellow compatriot - conscientious objector - Dr Ivan Toms.

Ivan, you go on trial on November 30 for refusing to serve in the South African Defence Force. This you do for many a legitimate reason, least of which is because you believe that as a person who regards himself as a patriotic South African, you must stay and contribute in the borad-based struggle for a free, non-racial, democratic Republic of South Africa. For this I salute you in your selfless commitment and your courage.

The victimisation and suffering you have endured so far has been harsh. Nevertheless I trust you will continue to stand by your conscience, and even at the cost of further victimisation, continue to actively identify with oppressed South Africans who - black and non-black, because they were born in-to repression or because they, like you, have refused to repress - have been harassed, tortured, banned, detained, imprisoned, banished, exiled and murdered.

Your loving care and concern - as demonstrated in your willingness to be put on trial - in defence of our Motherland in agony, will help enrich her soil so that one day she may be allowed to bear fruit which she will share among *all* her children.

Further, I would like to appeal to all those compatriots who are in self-imposed exile ... if after serious re-thinking - in the fact of what stands i.e. sacrifices Ivan and other compatriots have made - you still feel you cannot join them then please, at the very least, join a progressive organisation in your adopted country supporting us back home. It is because our nation needs active supporters - and not *ag shame* sympathetic bystanders - that people, like Ivan, make these commitments.

Yours n the struggle for a just peace.