

334 Auburn Ave., N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
404-522-1420

S
C
L
C

NEWS

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Martin Luther King Jr., *President*

Junius Griffin, *Director of Public Relations*

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

ATLANTA, GA., Oct. 28 (SCLC) -- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. today demanded that the U. S. Justice Department act immediately to halt brutal treatment and intimidation of Negro school children and adults in Grenada, Miss.

In a telegram to Acting Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Dr. King told how Negro students at two integrated schools in Grenada have been subjected to physical and verbal abuse. He also emphasized that parents and children have been mistreated in jails after being arrested in peaceful demonstrations.

Seven arrested staff members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were taken outside jail in Grenada this week and beaten by local police and State troopers. They were denied medical attention.

The victims, all Negroes, are: Lester Hankerson, 43, of Savannah, Ga.; Herman Dozier, 28, Birmingham, Ala.; Winters Knox, 26, Eutaw, Ala.; Bill Harris, 20, Albany Ga.; and Robert Johnson, 18, Major Wright, 46, and Willie Kinkade, 20, all of Grenada.

(MORE)

More than 100 demonstrators were taken to a State penitentiary at Parchman, Miss., where women prisoners were stripped of all but their undergarments and each male prisoner was issued a pair of pants. They were then subjected to deliberate use of the prison air conditioning system. The prisoners also have been threatened and verbally abused.

Dr. King's telegram stated: "A Justice Department suit led to a federal court order to integrate Lizzie Horn Elementary School and John Rundle High School in Grenada last month. Ever since, more than 100 Negro students have endured, inside and outside these schools, constant harrassment, taunts, profanities and threats from white students, teachers, principals, local police and State troopers."

On Oct. 19, an official of Lizzie Horn School threw a Negro boy against a table and then expelled him because he refused to give up his seat in a lunchroom where he was eating with white students. On the same day a teacher at the school slapped a Negro girl for sitting at a lunch table with whites.

Negro parents, concerned about the safety of their children, withdrew the pupils from the integrated schools on Oct. 21. School authorities suspended the pupils until Nov. 1, and repeatedly refused to meet with the Negro parents.

Peaceful demonstrations of protest followed this week. Law enforcement officers, who are under federal court injunction to protect the Negroes, arrested more than 250 demonstrators, including school-age children. By Oct. 27, about 210 prisoners were still in jail, unable to pay bond of \$125 each.

(MORE)

Dr. King asked the Acting Attorney General: "How long can law-enforcement officers in Mississippi be permitted to terrorize our parents and children? How long can school authorities in Grenada be allowed to make jest of Supreme Court decisions and federal law?

"Negro children, faced with an intolerable climate of harrassment and hatred in Grenada classrooms, are now threatened with deprivation of any free public education at all.

"Hundreds of Negro parents and their children in Grenada now despair of local authority and are increasingly uncertain as to the power and sincerity of their final recourse, the Federal Government.

"I call to your attention that the State of Mississippi was allocated \$80,000 in federal aid under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to prepare for integration of public schools. And more than 33 million dollars in federal funds are authorized in the current year for education in Mississippi.

"I recall the pledge of the present Administration to enforce with vigor the Civil Rights Acts and related statutes. It is your sacred obligation to enforce these laws. We strongly urge you to do so in the terror-stricken Negro community of Grenada.

"I trust I may be informed of immediate action."

(END)