



The Most Reverend Desmond M Tutu, O.M.S.G. D.D. F.K.C.
Anglican Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town

PO Box 1092, Milnerton, Cape Town 7435
Suite 44, Frazzitta Business Park, cnr Freedom Way & Koeberg Road, Milnerton 7441
Tel: (+27) 021 552 7524
Fax: (+27) 021 552 7529
E-mail: mpilo@iafrica.com

I want to express my solidarity with, and support for, Afri on the occasion of their 35th anniversary. I am proud that Leah and I have been Afri's International Patrons for more than 25 years. I first came to know Afri when they invited me to a conference in 1982, which I was unable to attend because my passport had been confiscated by the Apartheid government of South Africa. However, I took up that invitation two years later in 1984 and visited Ireland at Afri's invitation during the inspiring anti-apartheid strike by young workers in Dunnes Stores in Dublin. That strike was a unique and inspirational act of international solidarity by young people in Ireland and I continue to thank them for their contribution to the struggle for freedom in South Africa. I also commend Afri for the support which they gave to the strikers, including arranging for me to meet them as I went to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

That strike became a template for Afri's work in the succeeding years. They have continued to be involved in education, awareness raising and campaigning on a wide range of issues from opposition to the dictatorships in Latin America throughout the 1980s to their support for communities affected by the activities of Multinational Corporations today. I have been impressed, for example, by the way in which Afri supported the Ogoni community in the Niger Delta before, during and after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues, and how they have linked this struggle to that of the people of Rossport in the West of Ireland who are currently facing threats to their health, safety and environment by the multinational consortium which is seeking to extract gas in that region. Afri is admirable in that it has never shied away from making the difficult but necessary local global links.

Afri continues to work on a range of other challenging issues: such as support for the lifting of the blockade of Gaza; highlighting the dangers posed by global warming, climate change and peak oil; and campaigning against the ongoing obscenity of the global arms trade, costing more than 1000 billion dollars annually while a billion people in our world suffer from hunger.

Afri is a small organisation with a global reach, whose creativity and imaginative approach give it an ability to punch above its weight. Afri represents a dissenting voice that sometimes goes against the grain, an extremely important role in society, especially at a time when the dominant approaches have brought us to a situation of grave inequality and crises. I reaffirm my support for Afri, my congratulations on their 35th Anniversary and my belief that organisations like Afri are now needed more than ever and that they should be supported and encouraged by all who believe in democracy in Ireland and beyond.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu