

# **Gangs, Pagad & the State: Vigilantism and Revenge Violence in the Western Cape**

by

**Bill Dixon & Lisa-Marie Johns**



*Violence and Transition Series*, Vol. 2, May 2001.

**Bill Dixon** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Criminal Justice, University of Cape Town, and a researcher at the [Institute of Criminology](#).

**Lisa-Marie Johns** is a former Researcher at the Institute of Criminology.

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank all the people we spoke to during the course of our research for making the project possible. We are also indebted to Brandon Hamber and Piers Pigou for their editorial support, to Elrena van der Spuy for her comments on the report in draft form and to Wendy Meyer for making the contacts that needed to be made. Also, thank you to Wardie Leppan, Project Officer, [International Development Research Centre](#) (IDRC), for his ongoing support of, and insight into, the Violence and Transition Project.

This booklet was funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The Violence and Transition Series is a product of an extensive research project conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) into the nature and extent of violence during South Africa's transition from apartheid rule to democracy. This series comprises a set of self-contained, but interrelated reports, which explore violence across the period 1980 to 2000 within key social loci and areas, including:

- Revenge Violence and Vigilantism;
- Foreigners (immigrants and refugees);
- Hostels and Hostel Residents;
- Ex-combatants;
- State Security Forces (police and military), and
- Taxi violence.

While each report grapples with the dynamics of violence and transition in relation to its particular constituency all are underpinned by the broad objectives of the series, namely:

- To analyse the causes, extent and forms of violence in South Africa across a timeframe that starts before the political transition and moves through the period characterised by political transformation and reconciliation to the present;
- To assess the legacy of a violent past and the impact of formal democratisation and transition on the contemporary nature of violence by researching continuities and changes in its form and targets;

- To investigate the role of perpetrators and victims of violence across this timeframe;
- To evaluate reconciliation strategies and institutions, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established to ameliorate future violence in South Africa;
- To develop a macro-theory for understanding violence in countries moving from authoritarian to democratic rule, i.e. "countries in transition", and
- To contribute to local and international debates about reconciliation and justice for perpetrators and victims of gross violations of human rights.

Through these objectives, the Violence and Transition Series aims to inform and benefit policy analysts, government officials and departments, non-governmental and civic organisations, and researchers working in the fields of:

- Violence prevention;
- Transitional criminal justice;
- Victim empowerment;
- Truth commissions;
- Reconciliation;
- Human rights, and
- Crime prevention.

As a country emerging from a past characterised by violence and repression South Africa faces new challenges with the slow maturation of democracy. Violence today is complex, dynamic and creative in form shaped by both apartheid and the mechanisms of transition itself. In order to understand - and prevent - violence during transition in South Africa and abroad an ongoing action-research agenda is required. Through this series the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation offers an initial and exploratory, yet detailed, contribution to this process.

The Violence and Transition Series is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Work on the project focusing on the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) was supported by the Embassy of Ireland, the [Charles Stewart-Mott Foundation](#) and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF).

Series Editors  
[Brandon Hamber](#)  
[Piers Pigou](#)  
[Bronwyn Harris](#)

**Contents:**

- [Executive Summary](#)

- [Introduction](#)
- [Context and Origins](#)
- [Chronology](#)
- [Narratives](#)
- [Pagad's story](#)
- [The State agents' story](#)
- [The \(reformed\) gangsters' story](#)
- [Analysis](#)
- [Reconciliation: impact and prospects](#)
- [Conclusions](#)
- [References](#)
- [Notes](#)

## **Executive Summary**

The report begins by setting popular activism against gangsterism and drugs in the historical and social context of the Western Cape. It goes on to provide a short history of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad) - as seen through the eyes of the media - since its formation in December 1995. The main body of the report is devoted to the accounts of Pagad's origins, development and current status provided by the nine people interviewed for the research: two senior police intelligence officials, two former gangsters, a prominent member of Pagad, two seasoned observers of the organisation and two anti-crime activists with an intimate knowledge of Pagad and recent developments in the Western Cape.

What emerges from these competing narratives is an extremely complex picture. Defining moments - the death of Hard Livings gang leader Rashaad Staggie in August 1996, the failure of successive rounds of peace negotiations between representatives of Pagad and the security services, a 'shoot-out' in the Tafelsig area of Mitchells Plain in May last year between police and armed 'vigilantes'- are subject to vastly different interpretations.

The concluding sections of the report try to make some sense of the events of the last five years. They trace the origins of gang and vigilante violence in the Western Cape and provide an analysis of Pagad's formation, its development and the evolution of the state's response to it, first as a popular movement, then as a 'vigilante group' and now as an 'urban terror' organisation. The report ends with an assessment of the prospects for reconciliation between Pagad, the State and the gangs and an end to organised violence in the Western Cape.

### **Origins of violence**

The origins of gangsterism, drug dealing and violence on the Cape Flats lie deep in the unique social structure of the Western Cape. Forced removals and other apartheid policies provide a partial but by no means complete explanation for the violence. The history of the people expelled from the inner city and Cape Town's southern suburbs to Manenberg, Hanover Park and Mitchells Plain did not begin or end with the removals. On the contrary, the removals and the creation of new 'coloured' ghettos on the Cape Flats has to be seen in the context of the 'skollie' (young hooligan or law-breaker) tradition of areas such as

District Six and the impact, post-apartheid, of globalisation and neo-liberalism on the economy, culture and social structure of the Western Cape.

Many people believe that South Africa's transition to constitutional democracy coincided with a massive upsurge in crime. Whether this is true or not, Pagad's formation in 1995 offered a solution to crime with wide popular appeal. Instead of depending on the uncertain efforts of the state, Pagad called for the empowerment of communities and the mobilisation of popular opposition to gangsterism and drugs.

#### **Pagad's formation**

Pagad originated in a network of hitherto disparate and isolated anti-drug, anti-crime groups and neighbourhood watches frustrated by their inability to tackle problems whose roots extended far beyond their individual localities. Predominantly, but by no means exclusively Muslim, Pagad began with a loose organisational structure and an informal, collective style of leadership. It was open to approaches from other anti-crime groups and prepared at least to consider working with the police. Many of the more violent actions taken against drug dealers, such as the attack on Rashaad Staggie in August 1996, were neither planned nor formally sanctioned by the organisation as a whole.

#### **Pagad's development**

Pagad's development since these early days cannot be seen simply as the unfolding of a master plan conceived and executed by a small group of Islamic radicals. Rather it has to be viewed as the outcome of the interplay between many internal and external forces - of action by Pagad and its constituent elements and reaction by the State and its agencies in the specific political, social and economic context of the Western Cape.

The state's view of Pagad has changed dramatically over the last four years. From a popular anti-crime movement it has become first a violent, and therefore illegitimate, vigilante organisation and then, since 1998, an urban terror group threatening not just the State's monopoly on the use of coercive force but the very foundations of constitutional democracy. In line with these altered perceptions, the State's response to Pagad has changed from constructive engagement with it to demonisation and repression.

Inside Pagad, the first two years of its existence were critical. Dissatisfaction with the potentially dangerous spontaneity and political incoherence of the organisation's early days grew rapidly in the second half of 1996. So too did concern at the increasingly violent resistance of drug dealers to Pagad's established tactic of marching on their homes and holding mass public demonstrations. Disillusionment with the State's apparent inability to respond to repeated demands for action against the gangsters was also becoming more obvious. These changes coincided with (and may well have contributed to) the burgeoning influence within Pagad of more highly politicised and organisationally experienced elements associated with Qibla and other radical Islamic groups. Together with growing pressure from the State, this in turn seems to have led to a series of changes in Pagad including the emergence of a new leadership, the development of a tighter organisational structure and the adoption of more robust tactics.

## **Pagad today**

Combined with organic changes inside the organisation, the security forces' twin track strategy of rigorous enforcement and demonisation by association (with global Islamic 'fundamentalism'), has succeeded in transforming Pagad from a popular mass movement extending beyond the boundaries of Islam into a smaller, tighter, better organised, but also more homogenous, isolated and defensive group.

When the interviews on which this report is based were conducted in the first half of 2000, security officials and anti-crime activists alike tended to believe that Pagad's days as a mass movement were over. It might continue to have a small, mainly middle class, base in the Muslim community, but its back had been broken by the detention of more than a hundred activists, most of whom would eventually find themselves permanently behind bars.

If, as is widely believed, Pagad also exists as an underground organisation structured into autonomous cells for the purposes of military operations this is as likely to be the consequence of increased State repression as the realisation of some sinister, fundamentalist master plan.

## **Pagad and urban terror**

It remains unclear whether Pagad is responsible (and if so, to what degree) either for the assassination of more than a dozen leading gangsters in 1998, or for the wave of bombings that has hit the Western Cape since the beginning of that year. Certainly the organisation's attitude towards the two kinds of violence differs markedly. Studiously indifferent to the elimination of gang leaders, Pagad has repeatedly and publicly condemned attacks on what may be termed civilian targets.

Bombings and shootings have continued since this research was completed in the late autumn of 2000. Government ministers have been quick to blame Pagad - and Pagad alone - for attacks that include the shooting of Wynberg magistrate, Pieter Theron, and the bombing of targets in Constantia, Gatesville, Observatory and central Cape Town. It is impossible either to prove or disprove such claims on the basis of this research.

All that can be said is that, in the course of the interviews for this research, respondents offered many different explanations for the continuing violence (ranging from the assassination of leading gangsters to the bombing of the Planet Hollywood and St Elmo's restaurants), who was behind it and what the motivation of the perpetrators might be. Among those held responsible were gangsters settling old scores or fighting for new turf, rogue elements connected to the security forces seeking to undermine the credibility of national or provincial government, and anti-gang militants whose methods Pagad either condones or condemns depending on the softness of the target.

## **Cycles of violence and the prospects for reconciliation**

*The current cycle of violence in the Western Cape is closely if sometimes indistinctly related to earlier cycles. Contemporary events can only be fully understood in the historical context of (for example):*

- links between leading gangsters and security officials forged during the apartheid era; co-operation between other gangsters and the liberation movements in the run-up to the 1994 election;
- the use, in the democratic era, against organisations like Pagad of security strategies developed to counter the opponents of apartheid, and
- divisions opened up in the Muslim community of the Western Cape during the 'struggle' years between a conservative leadership and radicals involved in the fight against apartheid and/or the global politics of radical Islam.

The prospects for breaking the current cycle of violence to prevent it spiralling out of control seem bleak. Mutual distrust and antipathy sour relations between (even former) gangsters, the State, Pagad and other anti-crime activists. Yet the alternative to some form of reconciliation process - still more rigorous enforcement action - is equally unpromising.

### **Preventing violence: the way ahead?**

Reducing levels of violence in the Western Cape cannot be achieved by winning any 'war' against crime. In the short term, there is no practical alternative to constructive engagement between all those stuck in the current impasse of attack and counter-attack, crime and reaction - gangs, police and anti-crime groups. Over the longer term, something must also be done to tackle the roots of violence in the political economy of gangsterism and drug dealing and their devastating effects on economic and social life in neighbourhoods across the Cape Flats.

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) commissioned this research from the Institute of Criminology (IoC) at the University of Cape Town. It forms part of a larger programme of research by CSVR on transition, violence and reconciliation in South Africa. The focus of this study is vigilantism and revenge violence in the Western Cape and its association - real or assumed - with the activities of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad).<sup>1</sup>

In drafting this report we have sought to concentrate on CSVR's interests reflected in the funding proposal (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 1998) for the broader project of which this research forms part. As we understand them, and as they seem to apply to this particular piece of research, these concerns can be summarised as follows:

- the causes of, and trends in, vigilante violence and revenge killings;
- the impact of reconciliation strategies such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on this form of violence, and
- the lessons that can be learnt from this for the development of violence prevention strategies and the process of criminal justice reform.

*Following on from this, CSVr also wishes to test three general hypotheses in relation to transition, violence and reconciliation in South African. These propositions can be summed up thus:*

1. Although the nature and form of violence changes during periods of transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, the legacy of past political violence means that its extent does not.
2. The impact of reconciliation strategies such as truth commissions will be limited unless the changing nature of violence is recognised.
3. There is a significant relationship in historically violent societies between victimisation and violent offending - many violent offenders are themselves the victims of violence, and many victims are also perpetrators.

*Against this background the Institute of Criminology undertook to:*

- trace the development and the social and political origins of vigilantism and revenge violence in the Western Cape;
- examine the impact on revenge violence and vigilantism of long-term processes of reconciliation;
- reflect on the links, if any, between present, past and possible future cycles of violence, and
- assess the implications of the violence and the impact of reconciliation for reform of the criminal justice process and future strategies of violence prevention.

### **The research**

Our approach was to concentrate on Pagad and its various manifestations as a popular movement against gangsterism and drugs, a vigilante group and an urban terrorist organisation. Our aim was to go behind the often lazy generalisations and glib superficialities of the (now extensive) media coverage of the organisation to get a sense of how Pagad sees itself, and is seen by others who have had dealings with it.

In accomplishing this we faced the usual constraints of limited funds and a limited timeframe of 18 weeks within which to finish the project. Moreover, we were also confronted with the extremely delicate task of negotiating access to organisations - gangs, the police and intelligence services and Pagad itself - that are not naturally open to the researcher's critical gaze, and discussing with them matters, literally, of life and death. Our integrity as researchers and the confidentiality of the research process was therefore of the essence throughout.

Inevitably perhaps the somewhat ambitious targets we set ourselves at the outset proved hard to achieve. Arranging interviews with Pagad and the gangs was more difficult and took far longer than we had anticipated. Nor were we able to talk to the range of people we had initially hoped to interview. Pagad, for instance, were prepared to arrange for us to talk to an official spokesperson, but it soon became obvious that we would not be able to canvass a range of views about the organisation from the inside.

In the time available to us we had to identify interviewees and arrange interviews either through our own contacts or those of colleagues at the Institute to whom we (as ever) are extremely grateful for their help. We therefore make no claims that our sample of 9 respondents is representative of the population of security officials, Pagad members, reformed gangsters or anti-crime activists in any strict sense. However we do believe that the stories they told and the views they expressed are not atypical of the particular constituencies from which they are drawn.

## **Methods**

A total of 8 interviews involving 9 individual respondents were conducted for the research. Respondents included a spokesperson for Pagad, two anti-crime activists (one broadly sympathetic to Pagad, the other more critical of it), two reformed gang members (interviewed jointly at their own request), two police officials, and two independent observers.<sup>2</sup> In an ideal world we would have liked to have spoken to a much wider range of people directly involved in Pagad and in the gangs but - as many have found before us - real life rarely lives up to the expectations of eager researchers.

Interviews were conducted by Lisa-Marie Johns (Bill Dixon was also present on three occasions) and varied in length from three-quarters of an hour to twice that. All but one of the interviews was in English (the other was mainly but not exclusively in Afrikaans) and took place either at the Institute of Criminology or at the respondent's workplace. Again with one exception (where a contemporaneous note was kept) all the interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the interviewee and have been transcribed in full.

## **The report**

This report reflects CSVr's concerns and our constraints in some important ways. Firstly - though we use media reporting of events as the basis for the chronology with which the report begins - we have tended to rely for the most part on the primary interview data collected specifically for this research rather than secondary material accessible to anyone with access to a library and an internet connection. In referring to this material we have sought to maintain respondents' confidentiality by attributing direct quotations to individuals in the following way '[Quotation ... (Rn, date of interview)]'.

A second point is that the data we collected does not reveal a single truth about the events of the last 5 years in the Western Cape, how they relate to earlier cycles of violence, and how attempts at what may broadly be termed reconciliation have failed. On the contrary it reflects multiple truths - truths that may be easy to dismiss as partial and subjective but which appear substantial and convincing to those who believe in them.<sup>3</sup> As observers with not much more than eight interviews, a large pile of newspaper clippings and (in L-MJ's case) a long-term research interest in the subject to go on it would be arrogant of us to seek to arbitrate between these truths. Thus our aim here is to do no more than present these multiple truths as honestly as possible and then to use these narratives as we will call them as a basis for some necessarily tentative answers to the questions about violence, prevention and reconciliation with which CSVr is concerned.

This report begins with an attempt to set vigilantism and revenge violence in the Western



Cape in its historical context. We then present a short chronology of events since Pagad's launch in 1995. This chronology is intended as an anchor for the narratives and analysis that follow. In an area where even the most apparently trivial happening can become invested with massive significance and subjected to numerous incompatible interpretations, we try to distinguish between fact, speculation and opinion in a section based mainly on media reports that tend to be an unhelpful mixture of all three. Some of the disparate threads in the competing narratives offered by Pagad, the reformed gangsters and the State are pulled together in the next section of the report where we deal more directly with the formation and development of Pagad, its current status, the connection between present and past cycles of violence, the impact of and prospects for reconciliation, and the lessons to be learnt for the development of violence prevention strategies and the reform of policing and criminal justice. A concluding section then sets out to summarise the evidence we have collected in so far as it relates to CSVR's three hypotheses and ends with some suggestions about the future direction that the process of reconciliation might take in the Western Cape.

## **Context And Origins**

A research report of this nature is not the place to attempt to unravel the complex and controversial aetiology of violence, gangsterism and the drug trade in the Western Cape. A wide variety of explanations is already on offer. From the point of view of criminological theory most consist of an eclectic mix of ideas with neo-Mertonian notions of anomie and Chicago School social disorganisation theories particularly prominent. All are leavened with ritual references to the pernicious legacy of apartheid and some hand-wringing about the shortcomings of States in transition.<sup>4</sup>

Criminologically unsatisfactory though these accounts may be as explanations for the extent and persistence of violence and gangsterism, it is hard to improve upon them within the confines of this study. At the risk of muddying the waters still further what we present in this section is a distillation of the main contextual factors lying behind the all too familiar problems of gangsterism, drugs and vigilante action as identified by the people we spoke to in the course of this research.

### **Demographic difference: what is to become of 'die bruinmense'?**

Even if they did not make the point explicitly, all our respondents were clear about one thing: they, and we, were talking about gangsterism, drugs and vigilantism in a very specific demographic context: the so-called coloured population of the Cape Flats. The Western Cape is, of course, one of only two provinces with a coloured majority (the other is the Northern Cape). According to the 1996 census 54% of the province's 3.9 million inhabitants are coloured and around a third of these are Muslim (Haffajee, 2000). As we shall see, the distinctive demographic profile of the Western Cape with its substantial white minority (20.8%) and relatively small black/African population (20.9%) looms large in the minds of those who, like the reformed gangsters we spoke to, see 'die bruinmense' (the brown people) as doomed by their origins to a marginal existence - not white enough in the eyes of the old apartheid government, not black enough for the new.

### **Ghettos built on sand: the legacy of grand apartheid**

That the Western Cape is so demographically distinctive is no historical accident but the

deliberate consequence of the social policies of grand apartheid. The lower middle and working class coloured ghettos of the Cape Flats that extend from Mitchells Plain on the shores of False Bay through Lavender Hill, Manenberg, Hanover Park, Heideveld, Bonteheuwel and Elsies River to Kensington and Brooklyn in the north are a product of the Cape's long-standing status as a coloured labour preference area combined with the waves of forced removals that saw non-white people bulldozed out of their homes in District Six and ejected from the southern suburbs of Newlands, Claremont and Wynberg.<sup>5</sup> The social dislocation of forced - often repeated - removals to purpose built ghettos lacking both basic communal amenities and local sources of employment took its toll on people whose existence on the social and economic margins of white South Africa had always been precarious. Accounting for the initial popularity of Pagad as the 'saviours' of many a gang-ridden township neighbourhood, one observer had this to say:

One needs to understand that the people involved here really [are] mostly the coloured community, and these were the people removed from District Six who have been dumped in Bonteheuwel and these places which were really grounds for the growth of social evils, particularly gangsterism and drugs. So one would expect ... that these people would welcome [a group like Pagad] and I think they had tremendous support amongst the ordinary people (R5, 10 April 2000).

Another respondent also talked at some length about the impact of the removals on the informal networks of communal welfare and social control, built around the mosque and the Imam, that had operated in District Six and elsewhere.

That infrastructure was, I think, dramatically broken during the apartheid removal. I don't think people actually ever got together. A lot of Muslims still think nostalgically of 'this is how we used to do things' but in actual fact that is not the reality. [O]ne can speak about the apartheid removals and you know that ... as the people moved out into the townships they still paid allegiance [to] where they moved out from, like Muir Street or mosques in Woodstock. So they would still go there on Eid or on a special occasion, but there is no community left there - only the memory of the community that used to be (R6, 4 April 2000).

Traumatic though the removals were, all the blame for the gradual collapse of traditional mechanisms of social control cannot be laid at the door of the apartheid planners. Asked about the role of Imams in providing counselling and support for drug users in the immediate pre-Pagad years, this observer also pointed to other, more recent, challenges to traditional ways of dealing with deviance.

I don't think that [the traditional, mosque-based system] was working throughout. It wasn't working sufficiently. It's based on very small types of societies. You basically have a community, a mosque, the Imam at the head of the mosque and everybody being loyal and obedient or least paying allegiance to the mosque. That model actually goes back to the nineteenth century ... and I think the problem we ... faced at the end of the 1980s [was] that the mosque system was not sufficient, partly because of the fact that the community [was] growing very big and we have a much larger society than the small little

communities living next door.

In many cases Muslims continue to speak about their ... counselling systems around Imams but in reality they don't often work, partly because their techniques are outdated - they haven't kept up with the times as it were, they haven't kept up with the different socialisation of the person. ... [F]or example if a woman [has] problems - drug problems or other social problems ... the kinds of solutions they offer ... people might not reject them but in principle they don't think they're sufficient. So often the kind of solution they would say is, 'You always have to be around Muslims. You must pray regularly'. Or 'Women must accept the leadership of their husbands or the authority of the husband'. But [people] are not prepared to take these kinds of solutions ... they used to work before, but nowadays they don't work (R6, 4 April 2000).

#### **Islam: a faith divided?<sup>6</sup>**

As these extracts suggest, the Muslim communities of the Western Cape are not - and probably never have been - bastions of religious orthodoxy and political unanimity. Indeed one respondent saw the 'Pagad phenomenon' as a skirmish in a larger battle for the very soul of South African Islam dating back well over thirty years between those for whom the distinction between religion and politics was meaningless and others whose commitment to the liberation struggle owed little to their religious faith. When the struggle against apartheid reached its height in the 1980s these differences became obvious:

Then there was the big start with deliberations - in the 1980s - [about] the formation of the United Democratic Front as to whether Muslims should now actively participate in the liberation struggle on the basis of the religion as they understand it comprehensively now [as a way of life, with its own political agenda]. And it was a very, very intense debate and that is where the [Muslim Youth] Movement split, for instance. [O]ne view was that no, they should not [participate] - they should first of all 'islamise' the community, get their understanding right, their thoughts right. Then there were others [names himself and two well-known public figures] who said 'No. We are South African. We need to get involved in things like that'. And we parted ways there ... we parted ways (R5, 10 April 2000).

In effect he argued that the 'Pagad phenomenon' had to be seen in the historical context of a long-drawn out struggle within the Cape Muslim communities between the traditionally conservative, and studiously apolitical, leadership of the Muslim Judicial Council, individual charterists who took up the politics of liberation and radical Islamic groups inspired by the revolution in Iran who, though active on the margins of the anti-apartheid struggle, preferred political Islam to constitutional democracy as their ultimate goal.<sup>7</sup>

#### **The politics of nationalism**

Intertwined with these tensions within Islam is the uniquely fractured political tradition of the Cape. Though rarely referred to directly by our respondents, competing strains of nationalism - the racial nationalisms fostered under apartheid and writ large in the policies of the (old) National Party and the new (somewhat ambiguous) African nationalism of the

mainstream liberation movements - are reflected in fault lines running through the coloured population of the Cape.<sup>8</sup> In the ebb and flow of democratic politics individuals have found it relatively easy to make the transition from one tradition to the other. Committed tricameralists have become leading lights in the ANC. Yet, for the most part, the urban working class coloured vote has remained stubbornly loyal to the (now New) National Party/Democratic Alliance (NNP/DA) as its most dependable bulwark against the dangers of black majority rule. As a result the Western Cape remains - two general elections into South Africa's new democracy - the only province where provincial government provides an institutional base for the politics of opposition. Thus, tension between the two traditions - between an NNP/DA-led provincial administration and a national government firmly in the hands of the ANC - remains built into the political architecture of the Western Cape.

### **The catalyst: crime, gangsters and drugs**

It is against this infinitely complex and dynamic demographic, social, and political background that Pagad emerged in 1995. But - and here again this seemed so obvious to our respondents as to be almost unworthy of comment - the catalyst for its emergence was crime or, to be more specific, the widespread popular perception that, along with liberation, had come licence and lawlessness. Whether either crime in general or the particular kinds of crime - violence, drug dealing and so on - associated with gangsterism really did increase during the transition of the early 1990s is a question that will probably never be answered to the satisfaction of criminologists with a professional distaste for official statistics and a nose for a moral panic.<sup>9</sup> Nor is there overwhelming evidence that levels of fear of crime took off over this period.

Yet, whatever the criminological sceptics might say, crime was clearly regarded by enough people as a big enough problem for the simple message of the group's name - People Against Gangsterism and Drugs - to resonate with large numbers of people across the Cape Flats. As one cautious observer of Pagad's sudden rise to prominence put it, popular support for a group prepared to 'beat the drum' against gangsterism and drugs was 'massive'. With the family, the mosques and the other institutions of civil society apparently incapable of resisting the gangsters and the drug dealers, and the State unable (or unwilling) to act against them, the time was ripe for an organisation prepared to confront the problem head on, without compromise, and without fear of the consequences of confrontation. How Pagad emerged and what happened to it is controversial and forms the subject matter of the next two sections.

### **Chronology**

Any chronology of an organisation that has attracted widespread media interest from the day it was established, must be selective. What we have tried to do here is not just to pick out the main events of the last four and a half years, but to give some sense of the controversies, allegations and counter-allegations that have swirled around Pagad, the gangs, the State, and the interaction between them, since the end of 1995.

#### **1995**

- *December*

People against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad) is established.

1996

- ***January - June***

Pagad holds public meetings, demonstrations and marches.

- **May**

***Pagad marches to parliament*** to call on relevant government departments to address the problems of gangsterism and drugs. Marchers give the government 60 days to respond. Dissatisfied with the government's response, Pagad begins a programme of action marching to drug dealers' homes and issuing ultimatums to them to stop drug dealing.

- **August**

***Rashaad Staggie*** (twin brother of Rashied Staggie and co-leader of the Hard Livings, one of the most powerful gangs in the Western Cape) is attacked and killed following a Pagad protest march to his house in London Road, Salt River. Journalists and photographers at the scene allege that Pagad members threatened them (Golding-Duffy, 1996).

A prominent member of Pagad, Ali '***Phantom***' Parker, calls for a 'jihad' (holy war) against gangsters and drug-dealers. Later Pagad insists it is neither militant, nor exclusively Muslim, nor a vigilante group.

***Pagad issues an ultimatum*** to gangs to stop drug dealing by Monday 12 August 1996. Gangsters respond by threatening to burn down mosques and disrupt schools and Muslim businesses. They warn Pagad of the dangers of starting a full-scale war.

Pagad member, Faizel Ryklief, is killed in what is believed to be a ***revenge attack by gangsters***.

***Pagad receives international media attention***, but hardly of a positive kind. Coverage refers to the threat of 'heiliger krieg' (holy war) (Knemeyer, 1996) by 'Islamic militants' (*Agence France Press*, 10.8.1996).

Media reports link Pagad with Palestinian and Lebanese groups, Hamas and Hezbollah and talk of secret military training camps being established. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of ***Iran denies any links with Pagad*** in a letter to a newspaper.

Pagad's Head of Security, Nadthmie Edries, is arrested on charges of sedition. Ali Parker and Farouk Jaffer are wanted on similar charges. ***The allegations against all three are withdrawn a month later.***

***Signs of internal divisions*** in Pagad begin to emerge with allegations that it has fallen under the control of radical Islamic group, Qibla.

Qibla leader, Achmat Cassiem, is profiled in the media as a ***'holy warrior'***.

- **September**

A newspaper headline proclaims, ***'Gangs mobilise as Pagad splits'*** (Ludski & van Villa, 1996). Community Outreach Forum (Core) is formed. It is said to be an umbrella body including leaders from the most powerful gangs in the Western Cape. It claims to include both current and reformed gangsters. Core stages a protest march on Parliament calling for 'present and previous governments' to 'accept responsibility for them turning to crime'.

***Parker, Jaffer and Edries are 'expelled'*** from Pagad following a meeting at the Habibia mosque. Parker claims that his expulsion is the result of his 'discovery of Qibla's hidden agenda'. Parker and Jaffer register a section 21 company in the name of 'Pagad'.

- **October**

Two brothers, ***Nur and Ozeer Booley, are arrested*** in connection with the Staggie killing.

***'Police get tough on Pagad'*** say the headlines (Friedman, 1996). The government announce that the open carrying of firearms at public gatherings will not be tolerated. In addition, it is announced that the 1969 Prohibition of Disguises Act will also be applied if necessary. The police, under mounting pressure to be seen to be 'doing something about crime', raid drug dealers' homes and find petrol bombs and guns.

- **November**

***A Pagad protest*** at the Waterfront results in a clash with police. The brother of a Muslim cleric is fatally shot. There are allegations that a Qibla-led faction of Pagad provoked the shooting.

Pagad calls for a boycott of the *Cape Times* in protest at the paper's misrepresentation of the organisation as fundamentalist.

Leading Muslim organisations including the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), Call of Islam, and the Islamic Council of South Africa (ICSA) - together with prominent clerics and academics - call for Pagad to ***'mobilise public awareness without violating any laws'*** (*Financial Mail*, 22.10.1996).

Aslam Toefy emerges as a ***leading spokesperson*** for Pagad. It is alleged that he is also a member of Qibla.

- **December**

*Disagreements about firearms and masks* inhibit attempts to mediate between Pagad and the government.

**Pagad protests** outside Cape Town International Airport to highlight the need to control the influx of drugs at major entry points. The protest is declared illegal and several Pagad members are arrested. Supporters protest against the arrests at Bellville Magistrates' Court.

Police accuse Pagad of having become '**just another gang**' and '**part of the crime problem**' (*Cape Argus*, 20.12.1996).

1997

**Increasing violence** on the Cape Flats is attributed to inter-gang conflicts, as well as attacks and counter-attacks involving both the gangs and Pagad. The media report further divisions in Pagad.

Many religious leaders move to distance themselves from Pagad.

Community radio station 786 is found guilty of biased reporting and accused of inciting people to violence. An article in a British newspaper alleges that the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) is behind the formation of Radio 786 and is using it to promote Qibla's radical political agenda (*Financial Times Online*, 16.8.1996).

Late in the year the police launch **Operation Recoil** to curb the escalating violence involving gangs, drug dealers and anti-crime groups.

- **April**

A Pagad '**drug awareness**' meeting is disrupted in Manenberg and Pagad members are chased out of the area.

A drug dealer's home in the Bo-Kaap is **attacked and burnt down**.

Reports emerge in the press that Pagad members are allegedly being trained in Libya and Afghanistan.

Pagad makes overtures to the **Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)**<sup>10</sup> amidst allegations that the organisation is planning to contest the 1999 elections (Thiel, 1997).

**Core** announces it is calling in the debt they claim the ANC government 'owed them for support in the liberation struggle'. Rashied Staggie, a leading light in Core and brother of the late Rashaad, says he will contest the 1999 elections (Thiel, 1997).

- **June**

Cape Town is bidding to host the **2004 Olympic Games**. The bid committee meets with anti-crime groups and gangs to address the crime problem. Pagad threatens to boycott the sponsors of the Olympic Bid arguing that it is impossible to have 'normal sport in an abnormal, drug-filled society' (The Star, 7.5.1997).

- **September**

Several mosques and well-known Muslim businessmen are attacked and a number of people are killed. Press reports link the attacks to the **continuing 'war' between Pagad and the gangs** (Cape Times, 24.9.1997).

- **October**

Another attempt at co-operation between **Pagad and the police** is initiated only to be suspended three weeks later because Pagad claim that the police are not interested in addressing their concerns (Jacobs, 1997).

- **November**

**National Co-ordinator Aslam Toefy, resigns from Pagad**. There are suggestions that he disagrees with Qibla leaders over strategy and the use of violence.

Evidence of apparent **police complicity** in the activities of both drug-dealers and Pagad surfaces (Duffy, 1997; Oliver, 1997).

**Rival gang war between Hard Livings and Clever Kids** appears to resume after three-year respite.

## 1998

A string of prominent gang members are killed in drive-by shootings in the first quarter of 1998. Among the dead are Moeneeb Abrahams, Leonard Achilles and Ivan Oliver of the Hard Livings, as well as Katy-Ann Arendse and Faried Davids of The Firm.

- **January**

The year opens with **claims that Pagad is a spent force** and that internal leadership squabbles have rendered the organisation ineffective (Vernon, 1998).

Lansdowne police station is bombed.

- **February**

The **trial of Ozeer Booley opens**. He faces charges of murder, robbery, public violence and unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition in connection with the events of 4 August 1996 and the death of Rashaad Staggie.

Fresh allegations of **police corruption** and an unwillingness to combat crime are



made (Duffy, 1998)

Consideration is given to new legislation aimed at proscribing gang membership and participation in gang-related activities (Le May, 1998).

- **March**

Four youths are murdered at the Waterfront. ***Pagad member, Dawood Osman***, is sentenced (November 1999) to 32 years imprisonment for his part in the attack.

***Multi Agency Delivery Action Mechanism (Madam)*** is launched with the aim of reducing gangsterism and normalising community life by encouraging a partnership approach to crime prevention.

- **April**

***Pagad clashes with gangsters in Mitchells Plain***. Several pipe and petrol bombs explode the same evening.

- **May**

***Pipe bombs*** are thrown at the homes of two wealthy Muslim businessmen.

- **June**

Media reports of a new ***Pagad 'hit squad'*** appear. The group is said to be independent of the group's existing military wing (known as the G-force) which is supposed to have been infiltrated by both police and gangs.

***Police intelligence*** acknowledges that it is still unclear about the precise source of the violence because of confusion between inter-gang wars and attacks on gangs and drug merchants by Pagad (Van Zilla, 1998).

Mowbray police station is damaged in a ***bomb attack***.

- **July**

The home of prominent academic, Ebrahim Moosa, is the target of a ***pipe bomb attack***.

- **August**

***Charges against Ozeer Booley*** in relation to the Staggie killing are dropped as the State's case collapses, ostensibly because of tensions between operational police and the intelligence community.

***An explosion outside the Bellville offices of the special police task team*** investigating Pagad results in the death of a street vendor.

***Planet Hollywood Restaurant*** at the Victoria & Alfred (V&A )Waterfront is bombed, leaving two people dead and 26 injured. The attack is said to be a response to recent attacks by the United States of America on alleged terrorist bases in Sudan and Afghanistan.

***Pagad restates its commitment to fighting gangsterism and drugs***, but denies claims that they are losing support. They also criticise the media for holding Pagad responsible for bomb attacks.

The phrase '***urban terror***' begins to make regular appearances in official statements and media reporting on violence in the Cape.

- **November**

Ismail April (alias Bobby Mongrel), leader of The Mongrels gang, and Americans gang supremo, Jackie Lonte, are ***gunned down. Government-issue weapons*** are reportedly used in both shootings.

***Pagad member, Ebrahim Jeneker, is arrested*** in connection with the killing of Moeneeb Abrahams, but the case soon collapses for lack of evidence.

Four attempted murder charges against Pagad's National Co-ordinator, Abdus Salaam Ebrahim, are withdrawn because evidence has been tampered with. Attempted murder cases against Ebrahim and nine other Pagad members are postponed when ***two witnesses are shot*** (Carter & Mertons, 1998b).

- **December**

A bomb explodes outside a synagogue in Wynberg.

There are bomb attacks in Retreat, Lansdowne and Sherwood Park over the Christmas and New Year holidays.

## 1999

1999 is the year of South Africa's second democratic elections.

- **January**

The New Year is ushered in with a ***car bomb explosion at the V & A Waterfront***. Days later an attack on the Claremont police station is said to be the work of vigilantes. Pagad accuse the police of running a smear campaign against them (*The Star*, 8.1.1999).

***A Pagad member is shot*** during a protest against the visit of British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, at the Castle in central Cape Town (*Electronic Mail & Guardian*, 1999).

***Bombs explode*** outside the Caledon Square and Woodstock police stations.

***Operation Good Hope is launched*** as a continuation of earlier anti-urban terror operations, Recoil and Saladin.

Legislation designed to curb urban terrorism is introduced in Parliament (Chandler, 1999).

***Senior detective, Bennie Lategan, is 'assassinated'*** on the Cape Flats. He had been investigating the New Year's Day car bombing, as well as the alleged role in the violence of prominent members of both Pagad and the gangs.

- **March**

***Muslim businessman Rafiek Parker is killed*** in a drive-by shooting in Athlone. A similar incident at Cape Town International Airport results in the death of a senior detective working on urban terror cases.

- **April**

Claims are made that a ***backlog on court rolls*** is hampering Operation Good Hope.

It emerges that ***Rashied Staggie has become a born-again Christian***.

***Adielah 'Mama America' Davids, her daughter and niece*** are killed in a shooting at their Grassy Park hair salon.

***Reports of a 'hitlist' of prominent Muslim businessmen*** coincide with the shooting of Gatesville businessman, Adam Vinoos (Smith, 1999). Later in the year a Pagad member named Ragmoedien Jeneker is charged with the murder of Vinoos. He is denied bail and the issue of witness intimidation is highlighted in the media (Mail & Guardian, 1.8.1999).

***Pagad is alleged to be running an extortion racket*** demanding protection money from Muslim businessmen. Attacks are then directed at non-payers and anyone suspected of drug dealing (Mail & Guardian, 1.8.1999).

Well-known gangster ***Glen Kahn is killed in a drive-by shooting***.

- **May**

The ***US State Department classifies Pagad and Qibla*** as terrorist groups.

The Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) calls on Muslims to boycott the June 2 elections. ***Police uncover plans for a pre-election bombing campaign by Pagad*** (*The Sunday Times*, 16.5.1999).

Pagad opens a drug counselling centre in Rylands.

A car bomb explodes outside Athlone police station.

- **August**

Pagad member and *intelligence informer*, Ayob Mungalee (arrested in February 1999) claims that gangsters were being supplied with police-issue arms and ammunition from Gauteng (Merton & Ngobeni, 1999)

The new elite 'police' unit, *the Scorpions*, takes over the investigation of urban terror and organised crime.

- **November**

*The Blah Bar in Green Piont is bombed.* Homophobia is thought to be a possible motive for the attack.

*A pipe bomb explodes inside the St Elmo's pizzeria in Camps Bay.* Community Safety MEC Mark Wiley immediately accuses Pagad of being responsible for the attack.

- **December**

There are reports that Operation Good Hope is to be wound up.

*Deon Mostert is arrested in connection with the St Elmo's bombing.* He claims to be a police informer and to have been involved in both the St Elmo's and Blah Bar bombings. It subsequently emerges that he was working for a Gauteng-based police anti-corruption unit. The Mostert saga leads to renewed allegations of police complicity in urban terror.

Pagad's Abdus Salaam Ebrahim is arrested in connection with the murder of Rashaad Staggie.

2000

- **January**

It is announced that Operation Good Hope is to be restructured to work on urban terror in tandem with the Scorpions.

Ayob Mungalee, ex Pagad member and intelligence informer, implicates one of his former colleagues in the Planet Hollywood bombing.

- **February**

The State opposes Abdus Salaam Ebrahim's application for bail on the grounds of possible *witness intimidation*. A police captain claims to know of a witness able to identify Pagad members involved in Bennie Lategan's killing (Cape Argus, 9.2.2000)

- **May**

*Two State witnesses* involved in the Lategan murder case and another case concerning an explosion outside the Wynberg Magistrate's Court earlier in the year are *murdered*.

*Pagad marches in Tafelsig, Mitchells Plain*. An exchange of fire between Pagad marchers and armed gang members follows. Several Pagad members are arrested and charged with public violence, gathering illegally and the illegal possession of firearms.

A bomb wrapped in a plastic bag is found on the pavement outside the *New York Bagel restaurant in Sea Point*. The device is safely diffused but, a month later, a car bomb explodes outside the same venue injuring three people.

- **July**

*A bomb explodes at Cape Town International Airport*. Director of Public Prosecutions, Bulelani Ncguka blames Pagad for the blast.

- **August**

A car bomb explodes outside a coffee shop in the *upmarket Constantia Village shopping complex*. Safety and Security Minister, Steve Tshwete, alleges that the bombing is Pagad's response to the arrest of four Pagad members. A link with the conviction earlier in the day of another Pagad member, Ismail Edwards, for the attempted murder of a drug dealer is also suggested. A spokesperson for Pagad condemns the bombing and denies Pagad's involvement in the incident.

A week later another car bomb is detonated outside *The Bronx*, a well-known gay night-spot in Green Point.

Ten days later the third car bomb of the month goes off during the afternoon rush hour on Adderley Street in the heart of Cape Town's CBD.

- **September**

*Wynberg magistrate, Pieter Theron*, is killed in the driveway of his Plumstead home. Again the finger is pointed in Pagad's direction because he was presiding in several cases involving the organisation's members.

The next evening a bomb goes off on the doorstep of a popular local café in the student suburb of Observatory.

Yet another bomb explodes outside the *Samaj Centre in Gatesville* on the Cape Flats where the newly formed Democratic Alliance is about to hold a rally. Seven people are injured. Western Cape provincial premier, Gerald Morkel, walks past the device seconds before it detonates.

***Two Pagad members are found guilty of murdering a seven-year-old girl*** in Ocean View. Chrystal Abrahams was caught in the crossfire between a group of armed protestors and a suspected drug dealer and his bodyguards. The two men, Abduraghaman Thebus and Mogamat Adams, did not fire the fatal shots and are convicted of murder under the doctrine of common purpose. They each receive eight years' imprisonment suspended for five years on condition that they do three years' community service and are not convicted of a violent crime during the period of suspension. The following day Western Cape Director of Public Prosecutions, Frank Kahn, announces that he is to seek leave to appeal against the 'shockingly inappropriate' sentences.

Business Against Crime launches a '***Name the Bombers' campaign*** with a R2 million reward.

***Safety and Security Minister, Steve Tshwete, and Justice Minister, Penuell Maduna, proclaim that Pagad is responsible for the spate of bombings*** in Cape Town. In response, Pagad threatens to seek an interdict restraining them from linking the organisation to the attacks.

The pressure for ***new anti-terrorism legislation*** mounts as Minister Tshwete declares war on Pagad. The Human Rights Commission remains sceptical about the government's plans.

It is reported that a high level delegation is to visit Algeria for advice on dealing with terrorism.

- **October**

An attempt by four awaiting-trial Pagad members to be returned to Pollsmoor from prisons in the Boland fails amid allegations that ***shootings and bombings are being planned*** from inside the Cape Town gaol.

So-called Pagad hit-man, Ismail Edwards, is sentenced to 25 years for robbery and the attempted murder of alleged drug dealer, Nazeem 'Tinkie' Smith.

The Mhatey brothers (Pagad supporters) are acquitted on charges of possessing explosives. Their acquittal is attributed to ***poor police investigative work***.

***Pagad's national co-ordinator, Abdus Salaam Ebrahim***, is charged with terrorism under the old Internal Security Act.

***Deon Mostert***, the police informer who alleged that elements inside the security forces were behind the 1999 bombings in the Western Cape, is found guilty on theft charges, declared an habitual criminal and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

Press reports of the trial of the four men accused of bombing a Wynberg synagogue in 1998 feature evidence from a National Intelligence Agency informer about the activities of the Grassy Park 'cell' of Pagad's armed wing, or G-Force. Other

headlines claim that *G-force members are facing a total of more than 40 charges of murder.*

A week after a man discovers a bomb attached to the bottom of his car, *another device explodes* on the busy Main Road in Kenilworth close to the offices of the Democratic Alliance. Speculation in the media links the attack to court appearances by Pagad members on murder charges, continuing conflict in the Middle East (Democratic Alliance leader, Tony Leon, is Jewish), and the forthcoming local government elections.

Opposition parties call for Safety and Security Minister Tshwete to resign for failing to deal with the upsurge in violence in the Western Cape. Press reports suggest that while 16 members or supporters of Pagad have been convicted of offences related to urban terror, 14 have been acquitted on similar charges.

Members of the *Serious Violent Crimes Unit* mark Media Freedom Day by seizing video tapes of events surrounding the attack on Rashaad Staggie in August 1996. The South African National Editors Forum (Sanef) condemns the raids on media organisations including the SABC, Associated Press and Reuters.

### Narratives

You can only fight crime if you have a willing, able and unselfish community together with a willing, able, unselfish and non-corrupt police. The two in isolation can't do [it]. We believe it needs to be a combination of the two. But if you have the individual, the one or the other, it's not going to work (R4, 6 June 2000).

As a statement of a community-based organisation's commitment to partnership with the police this is hard to fault. Yet the person who made it represents a group that has come to be associated - not least in the minds of their potential partners, the police - with bombings, assassinations, armed vigilantism and urban terrorism. The question is, how did this happen?

### Pagad's story

Like it or not - and Pagad itself certainly does not - the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs have become the focus for any discussion of revenge violence and vigilantism in the Western Cape. It makes sense then for us to start with the organisation's own account of its formation and development using, wherever possible, its own words drawn either from the detailed interviews undertaken for this project or from the [Pagad website](#).<sup>11</sup>

### Formation

Pagad's organisational autobiography begins with its formation out of a network of hitherto disparate and isolated anti-drug, anti-crime organisations and neighbourhood watches operating in the coloured communities of Kensington, Salt River, Wynberg, and Surrey

Estate. The initial nucleus of Pagad consisted of no more than a dozen or so activists from small local groups frustrated by their inability to tackle problems that had roots extending far beyond their individual neighbourhoods.

[G]angsterism and drugs is such a big problem ... it doesn't stop in the Western Cape, it goes South Africa-wide, it goes Africa-wide, and it goes world-wide. You have a snowball's chance of opposing ... you've got no chance of opposing drug dealing [at neighbourhood level]. And that was exactly what the neighbourhood watches were up to. Yes we can say they were doing a reasonable job in terms of stopping petty criminals - and they themselves identified drug dealing was the reason for the petty criminals' existence - but they didn't have the capacity to do anything about it. Because ... the localised neighbourhood watch would have the localised gangsters that would attack them if that was all they were.

The impetus behind the formation of Pagad was thus the realisation that drug dealing was not a problem that could be fought street by street or neighbourhood by neighbourhood by isolated local organisations. By coming together as Pagad, these local groups and individuals sought to empower individual citizens, families and communities by creating and mobilising a critical mass of popular support for action against gangsters.

[T]he comfort zone that the individual drug dealer had ... was because they were actually made to feel comfortable by their immediate neighbours and simply because, even if the neighbour rejected - or in their hearts rejected - the drug dealer, the neighbour would ... during a passage of time, be covered into apathy because they know that this is a drug dealer - he's doing bad things - but I can't do anything about it. And that was what existed. [N]ow Pagad's aim at the beginning, and Pagad's first step, was to say to those individuals, 'Let us draw the line between drug dealers and the community who do not want drugs and gangsterism'. Now, believe it or not, that was the most important first mind-shift that needed to happen in communities ... that no longer [are] we going to co-exist with drug dealers and say the drug dealers are part of our community and we've got to accept it. The attitude was going to be that we draw the line, 'You are the drug dealer and we are the community and we don't want you'.

In essence Pagad set out to reaffirm and police communal boundaries by empowering the good and excluding the bad. Its aim was to ensure that there was no place, no 'comfort zone', for the drug dealer or the gangster in the good community.<sup>12</sup> But to achieve this people had to be prepared to make a public stand against drug dealing in their neighbourhoods.

[T]he only thing you needed to do was to take the initiative to let other people know that there are more people feeling the same way. And that was essentially the reason why Pagad would take to the street, go and announce to the drug dealers that we the community want you to stop with your drug dealing so that the drug dealer can't say that he has the blessing of the community. And the aim of this rolling action which actually happened ... twice a week, sometimes thrice a week, was to go to all these [different] areas and say, 'All these people



reject you the drug dealer. What say you?' And that was what Pagad believed was the most important part of the campaign, to empower people to say you are the drug dealer and we are the community. But if you didn't have that it doesn't matter what else you do, you're not going to be able to solve the problem of drug dealing.

Marching in numbers on a drug dealer's house was intended to affirm the so-called right-thinking majority's rejection of drugs and convey in symbolic terms their desire to expel the dealer from their community. Dealers and their families were confronted with stark - often painful - choices: stop dealing, stop associating with dealers, rejoin the community, or get out.

[T]his drawing of the line [between the community and the drug dealers] resulted in people having to take a decision. Am I with the community or am I with my family? [I]f ... a person in my family is a drug dealer, I have to make a choice: I have to either be a drug dealer or I have to be part of the community. And the second aspect on that same score is that the drug dealer was given his choice: Do I want to be a drug dealer, or a destroyer of the community, or do I want to be a builder of the community?'

## **Development**

### ***Early days: 1995/6***

Throughout much of its first year of operation Pagad marched against a succession of drug dealers across the Cape Flats from Hanover Park to Lentegeur (Mitchells Plain), and in Athlone, Wynberg and the Walmer Estate in Woodstock.<sup>13</sup> At the end of August they marched on drug dealers in Paarl while the organisation's Gauteng branch took to the streets in Lenasia. At this early stage the structure of the organisation seemed rudimentary.

[W]e had the situation where ... 30 000 people crammed into a stadium [for a meeting] and the next day people decided no more Pagad - [if] the leadership decided they're not going to organise another mass meeting - everybody would ... grumble, 'When is Pagad going to have [another] meeting?' But ... there was no infrastructure to make it happen, to continue anything, because it was ad hoc, it was loose. There were thousands of people, but there was no structure.

Three figures, Ali 'Phantom' Parker, Farouk Jaffer and Nadthmie Edries, were particularly prominent in Pagad in the early part of 1996 and are referred to on the group's website as having served as Chief Commander, Chief Co-ordinator, and Head of Security respectively.<sup>14</sup> However, it seems as though their position as leaders was relatively informal and their hold over Pagad's membership considerably less secure than their titles might suggest. As a local anti-crime activist close to Pagad at the time remarked, the high media profile enjoyed by these figures did not necessarily reflect their status inside an organisation anxious to avoid the development of anything resembling a cult of personality.

[T]he one thing about the way they operated was there was no particular leadership because they felt that Pagad - and this is what they stated openly and they [said] this over and over - ... that the individual was not important, the

organisation was important ... . So ... you couldn't say that one [was] the leader ... (R1, 15 May 2000).<sup>15</sup>

Nor, despite some inflammatory comments by Chief Commander Ali Parker about declaring jihad or holy war on the gangsters, did Pagad have any political agenda beyond the elimination of gangsterism and drugs.<sup>16</sup> Although some of its activists were also members of radical Islamic groups such as Qibla, Pagad was - and remains - a broad-based group with no political programme beyond the 'eradication of drugs and gangsterism from society'.<sup>17</sup>

### **Defining moments: death of a gangster**

To the national and international media the defining moment of these early days was the death of Rashaad Staggie. A leading member (along with his brother Rashied) of the powerful Hard Livings gang, Staggie was brutally lynched in London Road, Salt River on the night of 4 August 1996. The incident was reminiscent of the 'necklacings' of the apartheid years and was widely presented in the media as symbolising the escalating violence that threatened to engulf South Africa's new democracy.

For Pagad, however, other events appeared at least as important as the gangster's death: the breakdown in negotiations with the then Justice Minister, Dullah Omar, and the delayed but hysterical media coverage that followed a march on his Rylands home on 6 March; the government's failure to respond to Pagad's repeated requests for firmer action to be taken against drugs and gangsterism; the shooting on 7 August of a Pagad marcher by gangsters who had identified him at a protest meeting in Bridgetown the previous evening; the first signs of State enforcement action against Pagad as Parker, Jaffer and Edries were charged with sedition; the erection of road blocks on the freeway to prevent Pagad members in cars getting on to the Walmer Estate to deliver an ultimatum to a well-known drug merchant, Nazier Kapdi, on 22 August; and the meeting at Habibia mosque on 29 September which signalled a final parting of the ways between Pagad and its three most prominent members.

### ***Pagad matures: 1996/7***

How Pagad see events unfolding in the years that followed is less clear. The historical record on the group's website ends with an account of the meeting in the Habibia mosque and we were not able to look at its subsequent development in any detail during our interviews. What we offer here and in the next two sub-sections is therefore a necessarily somewhat impressionistic account of the general trajectory of Pagad's development based on its spokesman's reaction to the issues we were able to cover in the course of our conversation.

The causes of the Parker-Jaffer-Edries triumvirate's demise are complicated. Parker's repeated and very public complaints that Pagad had been taken over by Qibla, which was committed to overthrowing the government in furtherance of some hidden, fundamentalist political agenda, were one obvious cause of the split. To those who stayed with Pagad after 29 September, Jaffer had also become something of a loose canon, flying around the world on unknown missions and issuing statements to the media without consulting the organisation he claimed to represent.<sup>18</sup> Underlying these grievances - and implicit in much

of what we were told by our interviewee - seems to have been the feeling that Pagad had outgrown the pragmatic populism of the triumvirate. At the same time these so-called leaders had begun to see themselves as bigger than the organisation and self-promotion as more important than the fight against gangsterism and drugs. Flouting the principles of collective leadership could not and would not be tolerated.

Another significant development - also implicit in our discussion with Pagad - was a growing defensiveness in the organisation's outlook during this period. In the first few months of Pagad's existence marches were mainly peaceful affairs. But it was not long before the gangsters fought back.

The community knew who [the drug] traders were. So [Pagad] would march to a guy's house and then just give him a warning - stop with your nonsense or the people will judge you. Obviously that became a problem — they went to people, they gave warnings, but of course some people retaliated ... some drug dealers, whoever, retaliated. That is where the first confrontations ... took place (R1, 15 May 2000).

The fatal attack on Faizel Ryklief following a protest march against the Americans gang in Bridgetown is an obvious example of the dangers that went with Pagad's original tactics of march-and-confront. Pressure from the State also mounted during this period as the government's attitude hardened from one of cautious engagement (evident in the abortive talks between Pagad representatives and Minister Omar in the early months of 1996) to public opposition in the form of police accusations that Pagad had become 'just another gang' (Cape Argus, 20.12.1996). Marching on well-armed drug dealers and taking part in mass meetings suddenly became less attractive. With gangsters and the State respectively targeting members of Pagad for assassination or incarceration, carrying a weapon and wearing a mask began to look like elementary precautions.

[W]hen you [look] at the marches in the beginning, people were walking the streets ... 5 000 at a time. The stadium was filled with people.<sup>19</sup> But everybody could cover their faces.<sup>20</sup> And there [were] a whole load of pros and cons to it. But the one big thing was that people wanted to do something. But the reality is that you're not going to a soccer match. You're going to a place where you are rejecting gangsterism and drugs. You can close your face and show your numbers. But if you open your face your picture is going to be in the newspaper.

### **Defining moment: Cape Town International, December 1996**

One critical incident during this period was a Pagad-organised protest outside Cape Town International Airport which led to the charge - endorsed by the President's Office - that the people against gangsterism and drugs had themselves become gangsters. Pagad's account of the events leading up to this demonstration and the State's reaction to it illustrates the extent to which relations between the two had deteriorated within the 12 months following the organisation's foundation in December 1995. The background to the demonstration was a meeting between representatives from Pagad and various criminal justice agencies at which the chairperson, Western Cape Attorney-General Frank Kahn, had suggested that if Pagad wanted to do something about drugs it should focus its attention on entry points such as

Cape Town International. Taking Kahn at his word, Pagad promptly arranged a demonstration outside the airport only to be told not to go near the place by then Minister of Transport, Mac Maharaj, and President Nelson Mandela. Pagad's spokesperson captures their perspective on the issue:

Would we be doing justice to the community by listening to Mr Nelson Mandela or Mac Maharaj when in fact it is proven that these drugs come in here? We said, 'No - even at the risk of the profile of the organisation - we need to do what is right because if we succumb to pressures from individuals on one aspect, then we might as well pack up'. And that was where Pagad decided we are going to go ahead with out protest. It was legal ... and we [were] going ahead. The fact that we were labelled anti-State or whatever was basically one of the things that they used against Pagad in order to tell people this is bad news for you. And many people turned away from Pagad. But in essence the record speaks for itself again.

Seen from Pagad's perspective the whole thing had been little more than an elaborate set up. One moment a senior government official was advising them how to target their protests more accurately, but moments later a senior minister, and the President himself, condemned them as a threat to national security. By portraying them as gangsters and 'anti-State', and as dangerous people to be associated with, the government set out on the road to confrontation with Pagad amidst an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion that poisons the relationship to this day.

#### *The Terror: 1997/8*

The years 1997 and 1998 were bloody ones. In a sombre review of the year's events on the Cape Flats the New Year's Eve, 1998, edition of the Cape Times reported that a total of 202 people had died in the violence of the previous 12 months (Damon and Davids, 1998a; 1998b).<sup>21</sup> Just below the masthead on the 'Insight' page that carried the report a montage of gravestones recorded the violent deaths of 11 gang leaders. Among them were Katy-Ann Arendse and Ernie 'Lapepa' Peters of The Firm, Ian Oliver of the Hard Livings and, the grandfather of them all, Ismail 'Bobby Mongrel' April. Another report on the same page recorded the recent 'crossfire deaths' of four year old Sedicka Hendricks of Surrey Estate and Chrystal Abrahams, aged seven, of Ocean View.<sup>22</sup> How did Pagad see such events? What is their view of the terror that swept across the ganglands during these years?

The answer is that their response is largely determined by the nature of the target. Asked for the organisation's reaction to the violent deaths of so many leading gangsters Pagad's spokesperson was unwilling either to confirm or deny the involvement of the organisation or its members. However, he did express something approaching grim satisfaction at the fact that the gangsters had been killed and some considerable confidence that, as a result, fewer innocent people would die too.

[D]uring one year [1998] when, I think, thirteen drug dealers and major gangsters died [everyone] was saying, 'Terror. It's a major disaster for police. Do something about it. These people are dying.' But you know who died and how many? Thirteen. And who? The people who were killing other people.

Now [who] killed them we can probably debate until, you know, the end of the world. But the reality is that, take any year from 1992 upwards and I challenge you if there's less than 15 000 people that died violently in South Africa, then you know it would be a miracle. But nobody says 'Terror, problems, do something about it' when 15 000 people, innocent people, or people who are not spearheading violence. They die, they die like flies, they die everyday. Nobody raises a murmur. But because it is a person that is known to be a terrorist, it is now ... . But it is not the type of terrorist that we dislike you see. It's a terrorist that we have come to accept in our community and they don't come with a stereotype that they are terrorising the community. But they in fact are. And when they die it's not because it's a problem, it's because we make it to be a problem. Had anybody asked the other 14 985 people that died during that year, what are they doing, who killed them, what happened? Nobody cares. It's only the fifteen that's important and we want to know who did this. We don't have to. The only important thing is they died. And the chances are because they died, that the next year it will be 12 000 people that die and not 15 000.<sup>23</sup>

Then - elaborating on his point that the growing popularity of the term 'terror' in official pronouncements and media reporting on the violence reflected a profoundly cynical disregard for the experiences of ordinary people - the Pagad spokesperson went on to question popular definitions of 'terror' and prevailing assumptions about what counts as 'terrorism'.

And I think that again that is the mind shift that Pagad wants in the community - that ... people start asking the question of terror. Terror is not what you see on the front page. Terror is when a mother sends her child to the neighbour to say, 'Come help me, because the gangster is fetching my daughter for prostitution and I can't do anything about it'. In fact terror is actually when the mother doesn't even know she can go to the neighbour to go and ask for help because that gangster will just come and fetch her. And this is not abstract, this is a reality. It happens. And that is the terror ... . The question doesn't deserve an answer, 'Who killed the gangsters?' The issue is what happens to the 14 985 other people. And essentially when we ask ourselves that question in terms of conflict resolution, finding the solution to violence or whatever. That is the question that needs to be answered. How do we solve that problem?

This attitude contrasts sharply with Pagad's official condemnation of attacks on softer targets, and the death of people unconnected with drug dealing and gangsterism:

We, the people against Gangsterism and Drugs strongly condemn actions that lead to death and injury of innocent people, likewise we condemn the recent terror attacks in Cape Town.<sup>24</sup>

### **Defining moment: talks with the police, 1998**

The other main feature of this period was the continuing deterioration in relations between Pagad and the State reflected in the acrimonious failure of yet another round of talks with the police. Once again Pagad felt that the process was manipulated by the authorities and used not as a forum for devising solutions to the problem of gangsterism, but as a way of

obstructing, discrediting and then disabling Pagad by criminalising its leadership. During the discussions Pagad handed the police a list of more than a hundred drug dealers complete with names, addresses and details of their main stock in trade. The police response was unexpected:

[T]hey claimed at the time that their problem ... is resources, that they need to spend money on policing Pagad marches every week and therefore they do not have the time to go and raid the gangsters' houses or the drug dealers' houses. Now Pagad then signed an agreement with the police that for one month we're not going to march, we're not going to take to the streets because we want to give the police the opportunity to use those resources to act against the drug dealers who they have the information on. ...

We don't want to stop marching, but if they are interested in fighting the drug dealers then let them do it. We said, if we don't stop, they will always have the excuse that it is Pagad that's causing this ... . We stopped. We signed an agreement that for one month we will stop. [And] in that month the police signed an agreement that they will actually use those resources against the drug dealers. The month went by. It was extended to two months - they didn't act against a single drug dealer with the resources. When we started applying for a march again after this we made it public that the police now went back on their word. In fact I can tell you what the police did. [When the talks began] the executive of Pagad was relatively unknown to the police. But when we brought in the delegation, we brought in our entire leadership.

[T]he reason why we said we want to suspend talks is [that] ... at the time when we started, no one had charges against them. [But] at the time when we finished I think there were only three people who didn't - who [hadn't been] arrested for some charge and had a charge against them. So what happened was that the police [were] now looking at all these people ... you, the representatives of Pagad, we will find something against you and then we will say we don't speak to people who have charges against them. Now ... if that isn't malice then we don't know what is. [A]nd at the end of the day we said, what you did in these two months was to use your resources to hunt down Pagad members rather than drug dealers. And we said we are not interested in this. That is why the ... talks broke down.

### ***Strength from adversity: 1999/2000***

With so many of their most prominent supporters either in prison or facing criminal charges, Pagad have continued to rely on the organisation's collectivist tradition.<sup>25</sup> Our own dealings with Pagad in carrying out this research are evidence of this. When we first approached Pagad to ask for their co-operation they suggested that we should speak to their National Co-ordinator, Abdus Salaam Ebrahim. However, we were unable to go ahead with an interview because of difficulties in obtaining permission from the Department of Correctional Services to speak to him in Goodwood Prison. We eventually had to ask Pagad to nominate an alternative. When we finally did manage to meet someone from the organisation it became clear that Pagad had agreed to take part in the research, but only after lengthy deliberation. Our interviewee was also at great pains to explain that he was



speaking not as an individual but as a representative of Pagad and that he was only one of several people authorised to speak on the organisation's behalf.

The combined effect of what Pagad sees as State repression, media misrepresentation and the threat of violent retaliation by gangsters has been to change the nature of the organisation's support since the heady days of 1996. Pagad also point to three more specific factors that have contributed to their inability to mobilise large numbers of people for marches and rallies.

It must have been a calculated thing to bring this ... law in that said that, when you are in a gathering, you can't cover your face. It is a method of reducing the numbers ... because people ... can't afford to risk their lives. Not all of them have cars, they have to travel by bus, they have to go via the gangsters and so on. Whereas in the past ... people in Salt River could actually walk the street in Manenberg because Manenberg gangsters wouldn't ever get to them because they stay in Salt River. That's the nature of things. But now you go to a march, your face is on television. Whether you march in Manenberg or Salt River the Salt River gangster's going to see you. And that is why people [don't come out] - not because they don't want to go out and support [Pagad], but because of the simple reality - not even fear - it's the reality of having to defend yourself.

[And then] the next point [is] that people were even prepared to defend themselves. But the police systematically confiscated firearms of Pagad members and they still do. When that happens, the gangster has an illegal firearm, you have nothing. Now ... it's a stupid person that tries to defend himself with his hands when someone else has got a firearm. And that is why people also say it's OK when I'm there now, but when I am alone I'd rather not go to a public function. Reality.

Third one: you may be aware of the survey which was done by IDASA in two consecutive years.<sup>26</sup> The first survey was [on] violence in the Western Cape or something like that. And it dealt extensively with Pagad's support base and the police not having that particular kind of support in the community. They then analysed that it was the religious personalities that would change the minds of people regarding the Pagad alternative. The fact of the matter is that people saw Pagad as the genuine alternative. But that report said that if people's minds would be changed, it was going to be the religious personalities that were going to do it. And the State used the religious personalit[ies] in order to say to people - don't go the Pagad route, go the other route. Right. Go the what they call tolerance, negotiation, whatever route. [T]hese religious personalities didn't come out of the blue and decide to make statements against Pagad. It was because of the IDASA report that they felt, how do we cut off the community from Pagad. And they did it.

Now the fact that they want to make a couple of statements rejecting the violence now and the killing of this person and that person and - it's a whole, it's a big hypocrisy because they had a chance to support the community and they didn't want to. They chose the establishment, rather than the community.

And that was also a point where people who were still hanging onto the cloaks of the religious leaders, rather than onto the cloak of truth. Those were the people that separated from Pagad and chose to pray their prayer in the mosque and in a church rather than do their supplication on the street where they need to defend their community. And that's where more people left.

Exposed to violent retaliation from drug dealers, unable to defend themselves, and under concerted ideological attack from religious leaders, Pagad's less committed supporters have gradually melted away. For them the 'fad' of fighting gangsterism and drugs has passed. The paradoxical result is that Pagad has emerged from these experiences a smaller, leaner organisation, but also a stronger one with a more active, more purposeful, membership.

[T]he infrastructure [of Pagad] is so embedded that it will continue, it will continue. And ... the amazing thing is, there's a whole lot of things stacked against Pagad ... you might almost think it's stupid of anybody to join Pagad now. But the reality is that there are people that are actually joining Pagad now. And those are the people that we know are people who have already seen what it entails - it's the more meaningful participation. Because they were not necessarily there when it was popular to be there ... but they realise now that this is a vehicle that can help them. So participation now, membership now, is sort of in our view a thousand times stronger than the participation of an individual that had been there before. So if you gain one member now, it's like gaining a hundred members three years ago. Because the person makes a conscious decision, that, 'I know what all the problems are. I know I can die. I know I can be jailed. I know I can - everything can happen to me - but I want to do it'. And that's the difference in terms of the strength. And for that reason we believe ... that public perception in terms of media and just about everything is against Pagad. But public support in terms of the people who suffer is very much for Pagad. And membership has gone down dramatically, but every single member that is now added is a meaningful one rather than one that you don't know exists.

Thus, while the number of members has gone down, the quality of those that remain or join is much higher than in the days of mass mobilisation. In short, Pagad has drawn strength from adversity.

***Defining moment: Mitchells Plain, May 2000***

We interviewed Pagad's spokesperson on 6 June last year shortly after the media had been full of stories of renewed gang fighting and a 'Pagad shoot-out' in Tafelsig, a poor working class neighbourhood in Mitchells Plain with an unenviable reputation for violence (Cape Times, 22.5.2000). This incident cast a long shadow across the interview and illustrates many of the frustrations that Pagad feels today, 5 years after its foundation as a popular movement against gangsterism and drugs. Typically, the story begins with violence and the apparent inability (or reluctance) of the police to do anything to stop it.

For three weeks [the] community was bleeding, persons dying almost every day. And the police were nowhere to be found.



But then - and this too is typical of Pagad's experiences with the police:

... the Sunday afternoon Pagad goes into Tafelsig and you had police and helicopters and everything everywhere. And I want to say that ... when a policeman gets out of [his] car and announces [to Pagad members getting out of their vehicles] that, 'This is an illegal gathering. I give you ten minutes to disperse or I will act.' Then in the normal sense one would appreciate the fact that this policeman has seen a crime being committed, and now he's acting, right? So you would pat him on the back. But if you think ... to yourself that for weeks crimes are being committed and the police doesn't come there, they don't come in there ... the same policemen ... they don't come in there and say to the drug dealer, 'A crime has been committed. This is an illegal activity. I give you ten minutes to stop or I will take action'. No they don't. In fact ... that is why I say confidently that the police are not interested in fighting crime.

[A]nd I want to make [a] second analogy. Pagad is of the view that the police can and must go into the drug dealers' houses and go and seize their possessions and do what they need to do in order to stop drug dealing. But the police have consistently told us ... they need a sworn affidavit, they need a warrant, they need just about everything in order to get into a drug dealer's house. On the day [of the Tafelsig incident] the police went into a Pagad member's home, smashed his house in, smacked the woman that was standing in the front door and arrested three Pagad members inside the home, on a finger being pointed by a gangster that that person had terrorised him before. Now there was no affidavit, there's no search warrant, there's no nothing. But they can do it ...

You have these two incidents: ... a policemen making his judgement there ... firing tear gas, firing rubber bullets at the crowd [of Pagad supporters] because he believes they are doing an illegal thing. It's not because [the police] are opposing crime. It's not because the people are doing something illegal. It's because people are doing what the police don't want them to do. And there is a big difference. [W]here people carry on with drug dealing the police don't mind. But when you protest against drug dealing, it puts - and this is the second layer - it puts a picture into people's minds that all is not well - that when a community rises and takes to the street then it puts a picture to the rest of the world that all is not well in South Africa. But when a drug dealer is in his house and pumps drugs into children and the guys die or they kill their mothers, it's normal, it's a statistic ... it's all about numbers.

Added to this anger at police double standards and their apparent acceptance of drug dealing and gang violence as unexceptional and tolerable, is Pagad's disillusionment with the media and its slavish devotion to reporting not what Pagad actually does, or the experiences of ordinary people living with gangsterism and drugs, but what the police say Pagad do and what the government wants to hear.

[What] sticks in the minds of people [about the Tafelsig incident] is [a] report on [local news radio station] that says a splinter group of people ... left a march ... that turned chaotic. And they called it eyewitness news. I saw the [radio station] person and I still want to know where the eyewitness [was] ... But

again those are the realities that we as Pagad have to contend with.

And the only thing for us really is when you listen to the people of Tafelsig, then all these things that everybody else in their towers - protected towers - say is insignificant. They can say what they like. We know that when you go to Tafelsig then the people of Tafelsig will say, 'Man you can say what you like, [but] nobody's going to protect us. It's only Pagad that's going to protect us.' And that is the only thing of importance to us. It's not what the news people say because they're [never going to] report the truth because it's not in line with, unfortunately, the police report. Nor is it in line ... with what the government would like to hear and therefore they're not going to say it. And this is exactly the same that happened in the apartheid era. There's no difference. It's exactly the same. And I just want to say that the issue really again is Pagad isn't concerned any more about distortion in the press. Pagad is more concerned about how people on the ground see what is being done.

## **Hard questions**

This completes the inevitably incomplete story of Pagad's development that we were able to glean from our interview. But it still leaves three important issues outstanding - issues that we believe are critical for Pagad, its future, and the prospects for an end to the violence.

### **1. Going it alone: shared objectives, irreconcilable methods**

The first of these - briefly alluded to earlier in this narrative - is the question of Pagad's relationship with other anti-crime groupings and why, despite its stated aim of co-operating with 'people and people's organisation [sic], having similar aims and objectives', Pagad stands virtually alone in its fight against gangsterism and drugs.<sup>27</sup> Pagad's position on this is quite clear.

Pagad's constitution says that we will work with every and any organisation that shares the objectives of Pagad. Therefore Pagad has made approaches to just about every type of organisation and [we] actually accepted the approaches by ... all types of organisations in order to work together. However there are instances that [need] to be ... understood. For example, take the ... Manenberg situation where Pagad's understanding of solving the problem is that when it ... was already made abundantly clear ... to the gangsters and drug dealers that here is the community, here is the mass of people, and all of them reject you not because of who you are but because of what you do, your decision is whether you want to continue to be gangsters or come to the community. We believe that if they had enough brain power to sell drugs and to set up the business then they also had to have enough brain power to decide which side of the line they're on. And that is why we believe that it is important that they decide and make the decision where they are ... and then the community must ... cut themselves off [from the dealers].

The [community] police forum - and take Manenberg for example - had a different view and not only a different view ... superficially ... but ... a

radically opposing view to Pagad. And that is that they believe that - and this was the catch phrase I think - that harmony and peace could be achieved by talking to what they called both ... sides of the warring factions. OK now when we're talking about peace in the community if a group [of] people attacks the community then we are not talking about sides [or] warring factions, we're talking about an aggressor and a community that must be defended. And ... Pagad's position was that if gangsters and drug dealers terrorise and kill people then the community has already said we don't like you, we don't want you, irrespective of whether [drug dealing] is legal or not.

And that is the point where Pagad differs from the community policing forum. We don't talk to gangsters because we will [only] talk to them when they leave their gangsterism. We will talk to them when they leave their drug dealing in terms of negotiating where they want to find themselves in the spectrum of the community. We will only give a message to them to say that - and that is the only talking that we will do to gangsters and drug-dealers - we will inform them what the community expects from them and that is to give up their ways. We're not going to inform them how they can [give up]. We're not going to negotiate with them how they can continue their drug dealing and gangsterism and find their place in the community. And that is where the big difference is between what the police forums have done and what Pagad has done and is doing. And because of that we could not reconcile our programme with that of the community police forum where you have gangsters that decide what [the] limitations of their operation is going to be and in the meantime they're still terrorising the community. We can't work like that ... and therefore we made it abundantly clear we didn't want to work with [them].

From Pagad's perspective, the rock on which all attempts to work with other anti-crime groups founders is their insistence that processes of negotiation, reconciliation and reintegration can only begin when drug dealers have been confronted by the community, accepted the error of their ways, and decided once and for all that their future lies with the community rather than the gangs.

[W]e believe that every person that wants to do his ounce of good needs to be encouraged. But not at the expense of accepting a person within your ranks that is actually going to kill your son or your daughter. And that's what the gangsters do. So ... we have different ways of looking at it simply because we can't see the rationale in speaking to a gangster when he says to you, to your face, 'I will continue with my drug dealing, but you'll find a place for me in your society'. There is no place for such a person in society.

## **2. Qibla and a political agenda**

The second issue has also been referred to earlier but - since it goes to the heart of what Pagad sees as its demonisation by a malevolent State and a pliable media - it merits further consideration here. Essentially the charge - first levelled by Ali 'Phantom' Parker in 1996 - is that Pagad is little more than a front organisation for Islamic militants grouped around Qibla and the Islamic Unity Convention.<sup>28</sup> As such, its stated concern with the eradication of gangsterism and drugs provides cover for a wider, more sinister, and less popular political agenda aimed at subverting the authority of the State and reversing pieces of social legislation that are deemed inconsistent with a narrowly sectarian version of Islam, such as

the legalisation of homosexuality and abortion and the abolition of capital punishment.

There are several aspects to Pagad's response to these allegations. The first is that, even if the charge is true and Qibla/Pagad does have a political agenda, that is their prerogative.

I want to put it this way: ... there is no problem, [as] I understand it, to have a political agenda in South Africa. At least if we have a democracy you have every right to have a political agenda ... I want to say that it doesn't matter if [Pagad] had [a political agenda], and it doesn't matter if it even emerged from Qibla ... I'm not just going to say that it's not true, I'm going to say even if it were so, what is the problem?

The first line of defence then is that, in the new democratic South Africa, everyone - including Pagad and Qibla - has a right to be political. This flows into a second line of argument which is, quite simply, that Pagad is not and never has been in Qibla or any other organisation's political pocket.

The truth about it is that there are ... people who are members of Qibla that are also members of Pagad. There are people who are members of Qibla that are not members of Pagad. And there are divergent views [on] modus operandi between what people in Qibla feel needs to be done and what people in Pagad feel needs to be done. Totally independent. But there are members in common and there are members who choose only to be Pagad members and not [in] Qibla.

A third strand in their response is less defensive and aims to show how the association with Qibla has been used to undermine popular support for Pagad.

[A]n easy way to break down an organisation that has found its way into the hearts of people is - instead of trying to find factual issues - you say this is where the organisation is going wrong, you lean on a stereotype that has already been created and then link the organisation to that stereotype. And then ... you take it from there. People can then say do you or don't you want to be part of this organisation.

Now the issue of Qibla. Qibla has been demonised for whatever reason by the previous regime. It's sad that members of Qibla had actually fought side by side with members of the liberation movement during the apartheid struggle. But those very same members are now saying, 'Beware, Qibla has got a political agenda' to [do] whatever. And it is borne out in the emergence of Pagad. But why was it questioned whether Pagad or Qibla had a political agenda.? [Y]et 90% of the people fall for it. They say 'gangsterism and drugs is what you say you're fighting, but you actually have a political agenda.'

For Pagad then the irony is that a government whose members fought alongside Qibla in the liberation struggle have used its reputation for militancy - carefully crafted by their former foes in the apartheid regime - to discredit Pagad and proclaim them guilty by association of the cardinal sin of Muslim fundamentalism.

Muslims in the Western Cape had actually rallied to Pagad because they saw in it some salvation. But the powers that be knew that Qibla was actually not favoured by the majority of Muslims in the Western Cape and also Muslims had been conditioned - I am talking about Muslims per se - had been conditioned by the religious leaders as extensions of the apartheid regime to say that when you indulge yourself in political affairs, then you're staring down the barrel - you don't get involved with it.

Pagad's fourth and final argument on this question of politicisation is a question of tactics. They maintain that, next to arms, 'the drugs industry' is probably the largest in the world. It cannot therefore be 'unrelated to economics and politics' in the broadest sense. But, nonetheless, it would be foolish of an organisation like Pagad to turn the fight against drugs into a party political matter or itself into an electoral machine.

[I]t was Pagad's view, and still is, that when you decide that you are going to go for a political office or ... go and score political points, you will of necessity run up against other political parties. And then you will say to people, 'Make your choice: support the PAC or support Pagad, support the ANC or support Pagad'. And that in itself we believe would undermine the quest to have a uniform society that's against gangsterism and drugs. And that is why Pagad believes that it is not in our interest or in the interest of the community to forge ahead with a political agenda, ... striving to get into political office. [T]he objective isn't to have a person's voice heard in parliament about the issue, but ... to get all parliamentarians to have the voices of the community heard on the issue of gangsterism and drugs. And for that reason I am saying, while ... there's no problem in having a political agenda - anybody can - but the issue is it actually defeats the purpose of binding the community on the issues across the political spectrum.

Underlying this attempted stigmatisation of Pagad by association with Qibla lies fundamental flaws in South Africa's new democracy: firstly the real - and, at least to Pagad, increasingly well-documented - association between the main political parties and leading gangsters, and secondly the ANC's growing intolerance of political dissent.

And I will tell you now what the issue at hand is. It is all about fascism. [W]hen you oppose the ANC then you start becoming a political problem. And when it now emerged that the allegations that Pagad made at its emergence is true, that the ANC and the PAC were funded by drug money, they denied it. Now it's coming up. And the fact that the National Party campaigns were also funded by the likes of [well known ganglord and leading member of The Firm] is coming up now and it will come out. And that is why when you start stirring the political pot, then they come back with a political backlash.

### **3. Pagad and the bombings**

The last of the three issues we discussed with Pagad in detail has already been covered at some length in our discussion of the terror of 1997/8. All that we want to do here is reproduce our interviewee's reaction to speculation that the organisation (or at least its armed wing or G-force) has been involved in 'spectaculars' such as the bombing of Planet

Hollywood at the Waterfront in August 1998 and the St Elmo's pizzeria in Camps Bay in November 1999. As with so many of his replies his response to our questioning conveys both a sense of frustration at the way in which public figures and the media leap to conclusions about Pagad's responsibility for this kind of attack, and an acute awareness of the dangers of giving credibility to such wild accusations by taking the trouble to deny them.

Yes, Pagad has been accused of many of these things. I simply want to respond like this. Take the St Elmo's bomb. On the day it happened ... Wiley [then MEC for Community Safety in the Western Cape] said, 'It's Pagad, no questions asked'. It's amazing that he could in fact be allowed to get away with it in the public sphere, because it's a travesty of justice. It actually undermines any investigation that you're going to do.

But the question that was put to me by a journalist was, 'Was it a Pagad member that did it?' Our position is we don't do such things, we don't order it, and it's not part of our agenda. But the question that was asked is, 'Can it be, and is it a Pagad member?'. And I would say that any other organisation would have said, 'No, absolutely not'. But I put it to the journalist that to be fair, two things are going to happen. If I say no, the fact that you have asked Pagad the question is already giving me an indication that you think that Pagad is possibly responsible for it.

Now what St Elmo's has to do with Pagad, I don't know, right. Call it sensationalism. Now you say, 'But why Pagad? Why don't you blame the National Party, or the ANC, or the PAC, or Black Sash, or UCT? Why Pagad?' It is the question that is stereotyped in people's minds. In fact when this thing happened in North Africa, where they blew up the Embassy in wherever ... [BD: Kenya] ... in Kenya. We were having a conference in Kwa-Zulu Natal. And one of the journalists asked whether Pagad had anything to do with it. Now that's the kind of hysteria that happened. But the answer is - and this is the factual answer - if I were to tell you that it's not a Pagad member, then I would be in the same boat as Mark Wiley accusing Pagad of doing it, because then ... - just for the sake of defending the organisation and its members - I would say it's not Pagad, right. It's not a Pagad member. But I challenge a priest in the area of Camps Bay to tell me, and I challenge anybody to ask the priest, 'Is it possible that it is [a] member of your congregation that planted that bomb?' If the priest says, 'Absolutely not', then he's lying because he cannot say it with certainty. He doesn't know what the guy had for lunch, breakfast or supper and therefore he cannot say with certainty that it's not a member of that congregation.

### **The State agents' story<sup>29</sup>**

Running parallel and occasionally intersecting or overlapping with this narrative is the story told by two State agents. We will take the two main threads of this narrative - as seen by two intelligence operatives - in turn, beginning with their view of Pagad's development. Once again we present the story as straightforwardly as possible and as one of many truths.

### **The State on Pagad**

According to our interviewees, the origins of Pagad in the concerns of mainly middle and lower middle class Muslims contrast sharply with what the organisation later became under the tutelage of Qibla's Islamic ideologues. Indeed the State's view of its formation is remarkably similar to Pagad's own account.

At that point in time [before 1995] ... people from Qibla ... were planning to establish an anti-crime organisation - [an] anti-gangsterism, anti-drugs organisation. But the later formation of the organisation [as Pagad] was not necessarily a reflection of [their] hegemony — in other words they were not necessarily the dominant force. OK, I'll explain that. Mostly the core members initially of Pagad - the mass members - were militant [but they] were actually anti-crime activists [from] Hanover Park and all those kinds of areas ... Surrey Estate ... neighbourhood watch people ... who happened to be Muslim. That was the core - they were not ideologically inspired - they were [not] political[ly] ... oriented, but just had a very political approach to dealing with drugs and gang-related problems. But their base was entirely semi-middle class, lower middle class ... . That's why they never could develop a working-class base.

### ***Populism and spontaneity***

From these relatively blameless beginnings a very different, and more dangerous, Pagad was soon to emerge. But, at least in the early days, the group was a loosely structured and genuinely popular movement against gangsterism and drugs headed by an informal group of leaders who had emerged rather than been elected.

[Y]ou're not talking about an organisation that exists as an organised structure [with] bureaucratic process[es]. You're talking about some people at one stage having the ... expressed intent to form ... a movement [against gangsterism and drugs], but being caught up in the momentum of the energy they generate from the mass side. So you have a populist kind of effect and the individuals who lead at that point in time, Nadthmie Edries ... Ali Parker, are not necessarily leaders by virtue of being elected ... by having arrived there through a formal process.

Militancy - violent attacks on individual drug dealers and gangsters - was largely spontaneous and unplanned. In so far as a military wing (the so called G-force) existed, its operations were restricted to 'marshalling functions' on Pagad's regular rallies and marches on the homes of drug dealers. A 'turning point' came midway through 1996, after the breakdown of talks with Justice Minister Dullah Omar, when a march on a gangster's house in Hanover Park ended in violent confrontation between the police and armed activists.

[T]he turning point was the first march to [gangster's] place in Hanover Park ... where, aside from the march, this group of so-called G-force people just broke out and turned on the police. [It was a] spontaneous kind of thing ... it swept up

... it had no deliberate ideologically defined agenda.

From this point on shootings became more frequent. But the violence remained largely spontaneous up to and including the attack on Rashaad Staggie in Salt River on 4 August.

[W]ith the Staggie incident for example, Nadthmie Edries and Ali Parker and them really didn't know that was going to happen. That was just spontaneous action of a small militant group inside it. But they didn't plan it.

Throughout the first nine months of its existence then Pagad resembled an untended box of fireworks - something could go off at any time but you were only going to get hurt by the explosion if you were standing right next to the box.

### ***Organisation and ideology***

But, according to the intelligence operatives interviewed, even as Staggie was being attacked with the original populist leadership standing idly by, the influence of Qibla was growing. Slowly but surely Pagad was changing from a loosely structured popular movement into a more ideologically driven and tightly controlled political organisation.

But around that period [August 1996] another group is slowly beginning to build its hegemony - it's beginning to structure the organisation, OK - and that's Qibla. They're beginning to develop their organisation into an organisation and this is where their [Pagad's] leaders ... actually come with Qibla because they [Qibla] have the organisational experience from the previous era. They know how to organise people. They started filtering in to the rituals of ascendance by August. So when the organisation was structured there was now no more need for the populist, impulsive leadership of Edries, Parker and those kind of people. Things were structured in an organised manner now ... that was up till ... about the September '96 where they kicked out Edries and all of them. That was a natural [development] ... because populists who are not defined by an ideological agenda ... are not going to - for example - distinguish from a principle[d] perspective ... how wrong it would be for example to get involved in negotiations with the police, because all you're interested in is dealing with drugs. However the people who kicked them out have an ideological agenda and they use that opportunity - based on negotiating with us [the police] to actually kick these people out of the organisation - label them as traitors, munafiqs and all those kinds of things.

Using organisational skills honed during the anti-apartheid struggle, and armed with the ideological programme of political Islam, Qibla gradually asserted its ascendancy over Pagad. After the departure of the populist triumvirate, a new, more principled leadership with a more instrumental attitude towards co-operation with the State emerged around Aslam Toefy. However, within just over a year he too had fallen foul of Qibla's ideologues.

### ***Militarisation and political consciousness***

Along with this politicisation of Pagad came a growing militarisation. In much the same way as the armed wings of the liberation movements had been forced to adapt under the



harsh operating conditions of the apartheid police State, Pagad too restructured a much-expanded G-force into 'a separate entity' capable of mounting attacks more or less on its own initiative and quite independently of the marches undertaken by the mainstream organisation. Yet, even today, there are those in the intelligence community - including one of our respondents - who believe that Pagad is not simply a Qibla-owned brand name for the politics of militant Islam. According to this perspective, dominated by ideologues it may be, but the grassroots membership of Pagad remains only loosely committed to Qibla's fundamentalist agenda.

Until today, I still maintain that the G-force members and even [some] Pagad members are firstly Qibla members. They might have dominated the militia - Qibla members definitely - but that does not translate into all of the members down [t]here becoming part of some fundamentalist group, because people don't have that political consciousness here. They might be able to spew the slogans, but they don't have it.

#### **State responses to Pagad**

The second thread woven into our respondents' story starts much closer to home and relates to the State's response to Pagad. Rather than continue with the roughly chronological approach we have adopted up to now, this section of the report lends itself to a more thematic treatment, not least because - while the State's attitudes towards Pagad changed as the organisation itself evolved from popular movement into urban terror organisation - its underlying strategic orientation to the twin problems of gangsterism and vigilantism did not.

#### ***The pains of transformation***

The most obvious feature of the State's response to Pagad is the extent to which it has been structured by the process of democratic transformation being undertaken by police and intelligence services steeped in the thinking and practices of authoritarianism. Moreover, neither transformation nor the co-ordination of an effective response to gangsterism and Pagad has been made easier by the crisis of resources faced by a new democratic government with so many popular expectations to meet. Examples of the hesitancy and uncertainties that have dogged the police approach to Pagad abound. But the explanation that one of our respondents provided for police inaction on the evening of 4 August 1996 provides a particularly striking illustration of the problems experienced by a service struggling to span the divide between the 'skop, skiet en donder' of apartheid policing and the more subtle methods of crowd control expected of a democratic police organisation.

Our respondent's view of the events surrounding the death of Rashaad Staggie is that the police were disabled - and therefore perceived to be 'complicitous [sic] with what was happening' - for three main reasons. Firstly, as a result of their 're-training and re-accluturisation to the new environment', they knew 'what not to do so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past', but 'they didn't know what to do in the new democratic order'.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, as the march 'erupted' around them, they made what, from a public order policing perspective, was a basic error - they hesitated.

[I]n front of [the] casspirs people are burning things ... and [Rashaad] Staggie

was burning ... it was just simply that people didn't know what to do - they really didn't know. That's one weakness that they had ... they were more inhibited to act on the basis that ... public order policing was always in the spotlight in terms of their actions on the person. And this was the first real test in this province of them performing their work function by demanding a little bit ... stronger action than standing around at Parliament when people stand and protest.

The second failure was one of planning and the learned inability of paramilitary policing units to operate without a clear set of instructions and according to well-rehearsed plans of action.

The second [problem] was a lack of planning for the event. You see public order policing has eleven models of performance [according to the behaviour in a crowd]. [The Pagad marches] didn't fit into the mould of any of those eleven models ... . So in an environment where you're dealing with a group [public order policing unit] that ... is probably one of the most paramilitary-oriented structures within policing ... in the absence of clearly defined instructions [or] guidelines - you will do 'A' when 'B' happens and 'C' when that happens ... . [I]n the absence of that, if you place a person in [a] situation where there is no prescribed framework that fits that particular situation, that person is not going to react. [I]f you give confused instructions in that period you'll cause total confusion (R8, 14 April 2000).

The third problem was a simple lack of resources. With the public order units already at full stretch to contain an outbreak of violence in the taxi industry, too few people were deployed to effectively police Pagad marches:

So they had to adjust between two very high profile and ... labour-intensive, demanding ... policing experiences and juggle their minimal resources between meeting those needs and in the end not meeting [either] at all successfully (R8, 14 April 2000).

From this interviewee's perspective then, Staggie's death and the contribution of the police to it, was the result not of a conspiracy but of uncertainties and constraints attributable to the organisation's transformation. And yet this clumsiness in dealing with Pagad was not limited to those responsible either for planning particular operations, or for carrying them out. On the contrary, it seems to have pervaded the entire police organisation as two diametrically opposed schools of thought clashed over the strategic orientation of the State's response to Pagad.

There were two ... there are factional interpretations of how we should deal with the [Pagad and] the gang issue. [LMJ: From the police side?] Yes, there were people who, right in the beginning, were calling them fundamentalists, no more. There were people like me who said that is not what they are at this moment in time. There are fundamentalists among them, but that is not what they are. So ... that kind of approach ... makes you more open, you know, makes you more open to engage ... but the other people who ended up even investigating us for possible police complicity came from a different kind of -

very ill-informed assumption -[about] it - an 'old order' assumption ... because an old order situation is: the enemy needs to be neatly defined, neatly structured and neatly organised. The reality even till today on the Pagad side does not lend itself to such an interpretation. If you're going to waste your time chasing the structure, and chasing the route to define the enemy, you miss the issue. We [respondent's unit] spoke of threats in a situational context ... understanding full well that the context could spontaneously change into violence, not as part of a pre-defined structural agenda (R8, 14 April 2000).

On the one hand there were elements in the upper reaches of the security establishment - still clinging to the comfortable, 'old order' nostrums of the apartheid era - who could see no point in engaging with an organisation they had already written off as a front for Muslim fundamentalism in much the same way as the security apparatus of the apartheid State had portrayed the ANC as a puppet of international communism. On the other side of the debate were those - our respondent among them - with a more subtle appreciation of the internal dynamics of Pagad and a belief that there was scope for negotiation with the more pragmatic elements within the organisation and its leadership. For reasons explored in more depth in the analytical sections of this report, old order thinking seems to have won out in the end. As another of our respondents (also a senior intelligence official) admitted, the State's approach to policing Pagad has been indistinguishable from the anti-subversion strategies employed under apartheid: 'people change and politics change, but the methodology remains the same' (R7, 6 April 2000).

#### *A house divided?*

The acknowledged existence of such divisions within the State's security agencies over strategy, tactics and the nature of Pagad does not mean that all the media stories about infighting and personality clashes between apartheid era 'securocrats' and new blood drawn from the military and intelligence arms of the liberation movements are true. In reality, the sources of the tensions that do exist - for example between investigators and intelligence operatives - tend to be structural rather than personal or political. Whereas the emphasis of intelligence work is actuarial - the assessment and minimisation of risk - the point of investigative work is retributive - the apprehension, conviction and punishment of the guilty. And these distinctive aims tend to produce divergent, often mutually incompatible, operating practices. While the priority of the intelligence officer is to cultivate and protect informants in order to anticipate and prevent the commission of offences, one of the primary concerns of the investigator is to find witnesses able to testify in a case against an accused in respect of something that has already happened.

[T]hese are systemic issues ... these are not personal issues. It was frustrating [for the investigators] to ... hear information [that] 'this is going to happen and this is going to happen' and then it doesn't happen ... because [intelligence] use our sources to neutralise it from happening ... . It is one thing knowing what they [Pagad's G-force] are going to do, [another] proving that they did it at such a point in time because there are no witnesses, and the only people who could potentially be witnesses are informers who we by law have to protect (R8, 14 April 2000).<sup>32</sup>

### *'Acting on information received'*

Another facet of the security services' struggle to come to terms with the demands of constitutional democracy also serves as an illustration of how relations between Pagad and the State have deteriorated against a background of mutual incomprehension. During the course of the Pagad narrative related earlier we heard its spokesperson complaining that the police had failed to take action against drug dealers his organisation had identified. It will be recalled that Pagad's interpretation of this was that, instead of moving decisively against their - and their political masters' - old friends in the gangs, the police had taken the opportunity presented by a hiatus in Pagad's own campaign against drug dealers to fabricate charges against its leadership. As one might expect, the police demur from this conspiratorial view pointing once again to the pains of transformation to account for their apparent reluctance to act on information received from Pagad.

[I]n some of [the negotiating sessions] where they ... came with lists ... we followed it up. But finger-pointing is not evidence. You can give me a list ... I know, we know, most of the drug dealers ... we know all of the drug dealers. So you coming to us and telling us, 'There's one, listen this is his name and he smuggles drugs', is not the starting point of the case, you understand. If you could've told me (which they couldn't do), 'We've watched this chap, he delivers at this point in time', then we have a latch-point, you know. Otherwise we have to mount the whole operation ourselves. And they often gave us hundreds of lists where you require surveillance first to actually collect the evidence ... . We don't have the resources to every week give you feedback on hundreds because we can't run a hundred surveillance operations every week on the list that you give to us. So ... there was a sense in which ... Pagad didn't appreciate the kind of practical problems that we'd have in terms of being ... ready to respond to their [sense of] immediacy ... in wanting to know [what was happening].

What from Pagad's standpoint looks like a wilful dereliction of duty becomes, from the police perspective, the inevitable result of a regrettable inability to follow up allegations needing painstaking investigation if convictions are to be secured in ways that meet the exacting constitutional standards expected of the police under the new democratic dispensation.

### **The (reformed) gangsters' story**

Of the three narratives we have to relate here the third and last is by some way the least complete, and therefore the most unsatisfactory. Part of the reason for this is that - as we indicated in the introduction - we were unable to interview as many people from any of the main categories - Pagad, State and gangs - as we would have liked. But it is also due to the unusual nature of our meeting with the two ex-gangsters to whom we did manage to speak. This turned out to be less an interview than a monologue delivered by one of our respondents. Availing himself of a perhaps rare opportunity to demonstrate the depth of his new-found religious convictions to a captive audience, he responded with a bravura performance containing much to hold the interest of a student of popular theology but little of use to the present authors. Unfortunately time did not permit us to arrange any supplementary interviews so what follows is based on the somewhat meagre insights we were able to obtain from the discussion that did take place.

### *Die bruinmense: a race apart*

The broad picture that emerges from our meeting, and from informal conversations both before and after the interview took place, is of people uncertain of their and their (coloured) peoples' place in the new South Africa, disillusioned with the way they have been treated by politicians who promised much but have delivered nothing, and convinced that they, as reformed gangsters, have a critical, but hitherto unacknowledged, role to play in ending the violence that continues to devastate their communities.

For the origins of the violence they point to a crisis of identity - a sense almost of self-hatred - in the coloured community that allows 'die bruinmense' to slaughter each other in a way that other population groups - white and black - would find unthinkable:

Do you see? Black people don't go and attack their own people. They know how to identify the enemy. We bruinmense don't go out there and slaughter farmers. We are not black people. We are bruinmense (R3a, 5 June 2000).

Compounding this is a sense of the hopelessness of the 'coloured condition'. Marginalised by the whites under apartheid, the coloured people have fared little better at the hands of a black government since 1994.

Die wit mense het gedroom en die droom is realisties geraak. En die swart mense droom nou ... nou ons kleurlinge, daar is nie 'n droom nie. Die hartseer is orals. The white people dreamed and the dream became a reality. Now the black people are dreaming. But now, us coloureds ... there isn't a dream. The pain is everywhere (R3b, 5 June 2000).

And then there is a sense of victimisation that they, the coloured gangsters, are singled out for special treatment as though gangsterism was in some way a uniquely coloured problem.

Jy sien wat hulle nou alles vir die swartmense doen. Gangs is mos nie net bruinmense nie ... . Waar is die [gang]? Waar is die [gang]? Jy hoor niks want - hoekom? - al daardie ouens is die government. Hulle - die groot skurke - is in die government. You see everything they do for the black people now? Gangs are not only brown people ... . Where are the [gang]? Where are the [gang]? You hear nothing because - why? - all those guys are in government. The big scoundrels are in government (R3b, 5 June 2000).

### *Broken promises*

To our reformed gangsters the pain of their rejection by the government - and the continued political marginalisation of coloured people - is made worse by a sense of betrayal. Disowned by the ANC leaders who approached them before the 1994 elections, they are angry at getting nothing in return for their help. Six years on, the changes for the better they were promised have not materialised.

Die mense wat toe na ons gekom het, destyds was Valli Moosa hulle, Steve Tshwete, Trevor Manuel hulle, en die manne wat saam met ons gesit het en vir ons dan versekering gegee het ... wat hulle met ons gepraat het, vergelyk het,

iets groter gaan gebeur na die verandering. The people who came to us at that time were Valli Moosa and them, Steve Tshwete, Trevor Manuel and them ... these man sat together with us and gave us an assurance. What they spoke to us about ... something bigger was going to happen after the change (R3b, 5 June 2000).

As we were leaving one of our respondents recalled how a leading member of the ANC (now a government minister) had personally delivered combi-loads of T-shirts to a gang in Manenberg adding with some bitterness that all they were interested in now was undermining the National Party by making the Western Cape ungovernable.

### *The search for peace*

A more immediate source of resentment is the lack of interest shown by the police - and, to a much lesser extent, by Pagad and other anti-crime groups - in their repeated offers of help in resolving the on-going crises of gangsterism and violence on the Cape Flats. Having cut their old affiliations and embraced a new faith, they are mortified by the widespread cynicism and distrust with which their conversion and their commitment to peace are treated.

'Hy is bekeer, maar hy smokkel nog.' Dit kan nie bewys raak nie - voor God weet ek, ek smokkel nie ... die sarkastiese manier van die polisie want hulle vir sekere mense wil sé, 'Mense raak wakker. Hulle's bekeer, maar hulle smokkel nog ... . Ek sé vir die polisie, 'Gaan voort om my te ondersoek, indien julle van mening is daar is misdaad in my lewe ... . Maar moenie om elke bos ... . Hoe gaan hulle vir [my] in die tronk kry ... dit breek my as mens ook af. Ek wat jammer voel vir wat ek gedoen het.' [They say,] 'He's converted, but he's still smuggling'. It cannot be proven. Before God I know that I am not smuggling ... the sarcastic manner of the police ... they want to say to certain people, 'Wake up, people. They're converted, but they're still smuggling ...' I say to the police, 'Go ahead and investigate me if you think there is crime in my life ... . But don't go looking under every bush ... how they are going to get me in gaol ... it breaks me up, I who feel sorry for what I have done' (R3b, 5 June 2000).

For its part, Pagad's attitude is (in the words of one of our respondents): 'We don't talk to scum'.

Instead of spending 17 million rands installing closed circuit television cameras in Manenberg to provide proof when people have done wrong, the government should be working with the community to bring people together who admit they have done wrong and want to do something to put matters right.<sup>33</sup> The problem as our respondents see it is largely one of communication between all those involved in the violence.

Ons praat van mekaar en nie met mekaar nie ... . Geneen se susters moet verkrag raak nie, geneen se broers moet geskiet raak nie. Maar om dit te kan voorkom, moet ons kan kommunikeer. We talk about each other and not with each other ... . No-one's sisters should be raped, no-one's brothers should be shot. But to prevent this we need to communicate. (R3b, 5 June 2000)

Despite the cynicism they face from the government, Pagad and other gangsters like our respondents remain convinced that they and only they have the influence, the stature and the credibility with their erstwhile colleagues and rivals that is needed to resolve the problem of gangsterism.

Ons was deel van die probleem, maak vir ons nou deel van die oplossing. We were part of the problem, now make us part of the solution (R3b, 5 June 2000).

## **Analysis**

The purpose of the last two sections of this report is to provide an initial analysis of our interview data organised around the research questions and hypotheses set out the CSVr for this piece of commissioned research. We also try to make some sense of the competing narratives set out in the preceding section without distorting the distinctive, subjective 'truths' that each of them represents. In doing so we hope to emphasise those points where the stories intersect and overlap without wishing away the fact that, in many respects, they reflect very different, perhaps irreconcilable, accounts of what has happened since December 1995.

## **Origins of violence**

The precise aetiology of violence and gangsterism on the Cape Flats is, as we said at the outset, outside the scope of this report. What we can say on the basis of this study is that the roots of the problem lie deep in the unique and highly complex social structure of the Western Cape. Tempting though it is to lay all the blame for the creation of socially and economically dysfunctional, racially exclusive ghettos on the forced removals of the apartheid years, they provide an explanation of the rise of revenge violence and vigilantism that is far from complete. Apartheid policies of racial and cultural differentiation, institutionalised discrimination and political and social exclusion have undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the Western Cape. In themselves, however, they are not enough to understand the specific forms that gangsterism and vigilantism have taken on the Cape Flats.

Among these additional factors - and we make no claims either to originality or completeness here - must be the 'skollie' tradition of the old, often romanticised ghettos of District Six and Woodstock from which people were removed and the painful birth of a new democracy under conditions of rapid globalisation. The forced removals did not happen in a social vacuum. They happened to people with a distinctive history and a tradition of surviving on the margins of a racist and discriminatory society. And the history of the people removed from the inner city ghettos to the periphery of the metropolis (and their descendants) has not stopped unfolding since the 1960s. Like all South Africans they lived through the liberation struggle, and the transition to democracy, and are now living through its consolidation in a world where neo-liberalism reigns supreme. Political liberation may have been achieved, but to those still stranded on the margins of the new society the massive changes they were brought up to expect have been slow in coming. Social institutions and informal control mechanisms weakened by the forced removals have been further undermined by increasing exposure to the rampant materialism and individualism characteristic of a late modern market society. Meanwhile the State itself faces fiscal crisis as it struggles to transform its own agencies of social control from instruments of

oppression to effective mechanisms of democratic government.

Whether or not - and if so, why - the sudden arrival of constitutional democracy in South Africa signalled a sudden upsurge in crime nationally and in violence, gangsterism and drug dealing in the Western Cape remains deeply controversial. The important thing is that, for large numbers of people, crime, the fear of crime and the apparent inability of either the institutions of civil society or the State to do anything about them became - second only to concerns about employment and financial security (or the lack of them) - the most potent threat to their sense of personal and communal well-being. What happened towards the end of 1995 was that an organisation, Pagad, was created that reflected these concerns as they manifested themselves among the people of the Cape Flats. More importantly it also offered a solution to the crime problem that depended not on the uncertain help of the State, but on the empowerment of communities and the mobilisation of popular opposition to gangsterism and drugs. Unsurprisingly, the appeal of Pagad was both instant and widespread.<sup>34</sup>

### **The birth of Pagad**

As we discovered in the course of this research almost everyone has an opinion on where, when and how Pagad was formed, who came up with the name (and the acronym) and what motivated the individuals who first came together as People Against Gangsterism and Drugs. Leaving aside the individual claims to parentage of the name, there seems to be a broad measure of agreement about the origins of the organisation as a genuinely popular mass movement against gangsterism and drugs. Predominantly, but not exclusively Muslim, (a Roman Catholic priest took the chair at some early meetings), Pagad was particularly strong in middle and lower middle class neighbourhoods. From the beginning its leading figures were populists convinced of the need for communities themselves to do something about gangsterism and drugs, but open to approaches from other anti-crime groups and prepared at least to consider working with the police and other State agencies. Perhaps as a consequence of its origins in a number of more localised anti-crime initiatives, Pagad adopted an open organisational structure and an informal, collective style of leadership. Many of the more violent measures taken against drug dealers in the early days were neither planned, nor sanctioned. These tended to be the outcome of spontaneous action by small, more militarised sub-groupings sheltering under the broad umbrella that Pagad provided.

### **Pagad's development**

Perhaps the most important, obvious, but easily overlooked, aspect of Pagad's development is that it is neither linear nor inevitable. Rather, it is the contingent outcome of the interplay of many internal and external forces, of action by the organisation and its members, and reaction by the State and its agencies in the specific political, social and economic context of 'coloured' Cape Town. Bearing this in mind, what we present here is an account of how the organisation, and the violence that has surrounded it, has developed since 1995. This is consistent with the interview data and the chronology of events contained in the last two sections of this report. For us the key dynamic in the history of the last five years is the relationship between Pagad and the State. This view is reflected in what follows with the inevitable result that gangs and other anti-crime groups are cast in relatively minor - but by no means unimportant - supporting roles. Much as Pagad resents the convenient, if



sometimes misleading, labels stuck on them by the media at the behest, as they would have it, of the State's propaganda machine, we will take the (perhaps ill-informed) outsider's view of the organisation's development from popular movement to urban terror organisation as a framework for our analysis.<sup>35</sup>

*From 'popular movement' to 'vigilante group' - 1996/7*

The first year of its existence was a critical period both in Pagad's internal development and in its evolving relations with the State and other anti-crime groups. Inside Pagad, dissatisfaction with the potentially dangerous spontaneity and programmatic incoherence of the organisation's early days was growing. So too was concern at the increasingly violent resistance of drug dealers to the organisation's established tactic of march-expose-and-confront. Disillusionment with the State's ineffectual response to repeated demands for tougher action against the gangsters was also becoming more obvious. These three factors all coincided with (and may well have contributed to) the burgeoning influence of a more highly politicised and organisationally experienced sub-grouping associated (how closely is disputed) with Qibla. This in turn led to a series of internal changes in Pagad, including the emergence of a new leadership, the development of a tighter organisational structure and the adoption of more robust (or confrontational) tactics. It was at this time too that Pagad activists began appearing in public wearing masks and openly carrying firearms. Finally, although the circumstances behind the upsurge in Islamic rhetoric remain obscure, the period running up to the change in leadership was also marked by Pagad's public pronouncements acquiring a distinctly political accent.

At the same time, two leading activists told us, Pagad's relations with other anti-crime groups began to deteriorate. Early meetings between members of the Western Cape Anti-Crime Forum (WCACF) and the populist triumvirate of Parker, Jaffer and Edries had been cordial if unproductive. However, relations soon became strained as death threats (attributed by our respondent to elements within Pagad) were made against a leading member of the Forum. Later meetings with Pagad leaders were marred by the presence of masked and armed G-force members. Fundamental disagreements between Pagad and anti-crime organisations such as WCACF, crystallised around the former's public refusal to talk to gangsters, its willingness to take action outside the boundaries of the law and what other groups - both Muslim and non-Muslim - saw as its growing religious absolutism.<sup>36</sup>

Changes in the organisation, tactics and public profile of Pagad, together with mounting pressure on the State to be seen to be doing something about violence, irrespective of those responsible (gangs or anti-gang activists), eventually led to a hardening in the State's position. Instead of being seen as part of a possible, albeit high-risk, solution to the problem of crime and violence, Pagad suddenly became part of that problem - a threat both to the new State's legitimacy and to its monopoly on the use of force. In the view of an increasingly beleaguered government, the cure of popular mass action was proving as debilitating as the disease of gangsterism. Statements about Pagad having become 'just another gang' made towards the end of 1996 signalled this change in attitude and the beginning of more systematic attempts to associate the group with the menacing political agenda of militant Islam. In reality, the link between Pagad and Qibla may be as insubstantial as an overlap in their respective support bases. Yet, with the popular imagination fired by the long-running global moral panic over Islamic fundamentalism, the

ability to connect the two organisations, and present the former as a front for the latter, has proved a powerful weapon in the armoury of the State in its attempts to strip away Pagad's support among moderate Muslims and non-believers alike.

*From 'vigilante group' to 'urban terrorists' - 1997/9*

For the next two years the spiral of action and reaction dragged relations between Pagad and the State ever downwards into confrontation and violence. The changes that had taken place inside Pagad towards the end of 1996 were consolidated as membership of the organisation soon became a high-risk enterprise. The gangs responded to the threat posed by Pagad by coming together to form Core, while pressure from the security forces was unremitting in its intensity. Whatever their political affiliation may have been, it seems clear that Pagad's membership shrank as the dangers attached to it multiplied, but simultaneously became more active and more committed. This in turn may have contributed to the further changes in the leadership and structure of the organisation that occurred in late 1997 and appear to have been a feature of Pagad's development throughout this period.

The relationship, if any, between Pagad and the assassins and the bombers responsible for the 'terror' that reached its height in 1998 remains shrouded in mystery. Some credible - and some frankly incredible - evidence exists that the violence and counter-violence stem from several sources: anti-gang militants whose methods Pagad deprecates with varying degrees of vehemence depending on the softness of the target, rogue elements connected to the security forces, and unreformed gangsters taking advantage of the general mayhem either to settle old scores or acquire new turf. In any event, the government's response was to step up the fight against what was now routinely described by official spokespeople and the media as 'urban terror' by launching (in January 1999) the most ambitious and well-publicised of a series of special police operations, Operation Good Hope. Ever more fearful of the threat posed to South Africa's new democracy by violent crime and its palpable inability to do much to control it, the State redoubled its efforts to disrupt Pagad by arresting and charging activists in unprecedented numbers.

Sadly we have no means of verifying the accuracy of our respondents' observations. However, if the majority of those unconnected with the organisation are correct and Pagad had been taken over by well-organised Islamic militants, and then restructured on classical 'struggle' lines, this is at least as likely to have been a reaction to increased State repression as the unfolding of some fundamentalist master plan. Quite understandably, Pagad chose neither to confirm nor deny any links with the assassins responsible for the demise of so many leading gangsters. But again, if Pagad did establish a well-trained military wing with the cell structure typical of an underground organisation, it is impossible to say whether that was part of a long-term strategy for Pagad's development worked out by Qibla, an opportunistic reaction to the twin dangers of State repression and gang retaliation, or a combination of the two.

*From 'urban terrorists' to empty shell: Pagad now*

Untangling the recent past in order to discern some pattern in the rapidly unfolding events of the last four and a half years is hard enough. Still more difficult is the task of assessing where Pagad is today. From Pagad's own perspective it is a leaner, but stronger organisation

than it was back in 1996 when it could fill stadiums and put thousands on the streets. It continues to play a vital social and political role in empowering communities sapped of their vital energy by gangsterism and drugs. One respondent described this as a contemporary form of the tot system.

[H]istorically in the Western Cape specifically people were oppressed by the tot system. The farmers were in power because they gave their labourers wine to drink ... . Now they [are] more sophisticated ... and the politicians know, with all due respect, and the economists know, that if you've got to battle against drug addiction and if you are ... not going to be sober for most of your life, then you're never going to be economically productive, to fend for yourself. Nor are you going to be politically clear in order to ... organise your own community ... . Now what we [are] saying is that if you want to empower the community to be politically active and to be economically active then we've got to undo the tot system and the sophisticated tot system in drugs and gangsterism. And that is what our perspective is, that the community will always be subjugated if they continuously have to fight against the addiction of drugs and the terrorism of gangsterism (R4, 6 June 2000).

Pagad is also embroiled in an apparently endless battle with a State that treats it, rather than gangsterism, as the primary threat to law and order, and that is prepared to consider draconian measures to prevent it from operating. In this respect at least the security forces seem to believe that they have achieved some notable successes. Bombings still occur, levels of violence on the Cape Flats remain tragically high, and the failure to convict those responsible for outrages such as the Planet Hollywood and St Elmo's restaurant attacks gets more embarrassing by the day. Yet there seems to be a growing conviction in police and intelligence circles - shared by some of our more neutral respondents - that Pagad's day has come and gone. No doubt, they concede, Pagad will continue to have a small popular, mainly middle-class, constituency in the Muslim community as long as gangsterism and drug dealing persist. The gunmen associated with it and other radical Islamic groups such as Mail (Muslims Against Illegitimate Leaders) and Mago (Muslims Against Global Oppression) may continue to attack the occasional tourist target, or to assassinate the odd gangster, but Pagad's back has been broken by the detention of more than a hundred key activists, most of whom will eventually find themselves permanently behind bars.

Thus, from their very different perspectives, both Pagad and the State seem to agree that the twin track strategy of demonisation and rigorous enforcement employed by the security forces over the last four years, combined with organic changes inside Pagad, has succeeded in transforming it from a popular mass movement extending well beyond the confines of respectable Islam into a smaller, tighter, better organised, but also more homogenous, isolated and defensive group. In the meantime the violence that led to Pagad's formation in the first place continues undiminished either by the elimination of so many leading gangsters, or the largely unsuccessful efforts of the State to get to grips with organised crime.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as one student of gangsterism on the Cape Flats put it, the full implications of the bloodletting of 1998 may only now be emerging in a renewed upsurge of violence over the past few months.

Nineteen ninety-eight was the watershed year - fifteen gang leaders, all

affiliated to Core, were killed. They were executed. So in that sense I would say Pagad achieved its aim ... it did achieve its stated aim of getting rid of gang leaders. But it did a greater disservice to the community because by taking away those guys and killing them ... what has arisen is that the gangs have become decentralised. Previously under [the old] tradition the gangs were centralised ... they [had an] identified leadership and [that] leadership took responsibility for all actions of their members: they had to issue guns, they had to deal with drugs, they had to store guns, they had to pay people and we could all identify [them].

When those leaders were taken away - what we have now on the Cape Flats - all these gang fights occurring - we have new emerging youngsters within the gang[s] that have their own factions. [There]'s jostling for leadership - and the only way they can prove their leadership is to actually take their gang, unite them, and go and fight against the others. Now ... in Bonteheuwel, in Manenberg, in Mitchells Plain, gang fights [have] flared up now. It's evidence of this vacuum in leadership in the gangs. And so it's going to take some time and much more gang fights before you're going to have a new discernible layer of leaders in the gangs. [G]angs have decentralised and that's ... much more dangerous for us in the community, because when the gangs decentralise, then you don't know who's doing what ... . Then you can take eight or nine or ten people and they can form their own section of the gang, they can specialise in armed robberies for instance. Whereas under centralisation you could detect ... immediately what's going on - now you can't do that (R2, 6 April 2000).

If this analysis is correct it suggests that the current spiral of violence and counter-violence must be broken if further bloodshed is to be prevented in the future. But this takes us into another specific area of concern to CSVR - the links between past and present cycles of violence.

### **Cycles of violence**

We have already argued that the violence - attack, counter-attack, and counter-counter-attack - that has overtaken the Western Cape in the last five years is not, and never has been, either inevitable or unstoppable. There is no sense in which the present cycle of violence (if indeed it can be seen as such rather than as a series of mini-cycles as the analysis in previous paragraphs suggests) is the result of some fateful historical logic working itself out. But this is not to say that no connections can be made between what has occurred since 1995 and the violence of earlier years. Far from it, for all our respondents were clear that - complicated though the genealogy may be - violence breeds violence. The following are just some of the ways in which they saw history if not repeating itself in the current violence then at least reaching out to touch the main players in the bloody drama of the late 1990s.

### **Gangster politics**

Overshadowing everything, but explaining little, is of course the grand violence of apartheid in the specific form of the institutionalised violence that lies at the heart of any police State. As we have seen, the forced removal of large numbers of people from the

inner city districts and verdant suburbs at the foot of Table Mountain created an environment in which gangsterism could flourish. Then, having created and populated the new ghettos on the Cape Flats, the apartheid State abandoned them, choosing for the most part to police only those (politically motivated) infractions that threatened the security of the State or those individuals who chose to prey not on their neighbours, but on the white social elite.<sup>38</sup> As the liberation struggle intensified in the late 1970s and 1980s, an increasingly desperate police force also turned to the gangs for help against their political opponents.<sup>39</sup> In exchange for money, arms and the State's tacit approval for their illicit operations (provided, it seems safe to assume, that those operations were restricted to the ghetto), at least some gangsters were happy to oblige by harassing - even killing - anti-apartheid activists. Convenient though they were at the time, the relationships forged between gangsters and police officers have come back to haunt those among the latter group who now find themselves serving their former political opponents and encumbered by the heavy baggage of the past.

However, it was not only the old apartheid State and its agents that engaged with gangster elements. We have already seen how the reformed gangsters we spoke to claim to have been approached by senior politicians for help prior to the 1994 elections. Even allowing for some exaggeration in the accounts we were given, it is hard to see how any political organisation could have hoped to operate in places like Manenberg without the acquiescence of leading gangsters as the area's de facto civil authority.<sup>40</sup> Nor were the former liberation movements unsympathetic to those gangsters eager to play a more active political role by joining their ranks as party members. Thus, one respondent with some personal knowledge of the affair told us that, when several members of one of the most notorious Cape Flats gangs (including its then leader) tried to join the ANC, their applications were rejected by the local party branch only to be approved at provincial level.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile other gangsters were cementing old alliances by pledging their support to the National Party in the forthcoming elections.<sup>42</sup>

The significance of all this for present purposes is not that relationships were forged between gangsters on the one hand, and police officials and politicians from all the major political parties in the Western Cape on the other. Rather, what concerns us here is that these relationships create the appearance (if not the reality) of collusion between the State and the gangs. This in turn underpins and lends credibility to Pagad's claims that the State - compromised by the criminal connections of its personnel - blithely ignores the blatantly illegal and socially destructive activities of the gangs while mobilising all the force at its disposal to crush an anti-crime organisation such as itself.

### **Pagad, Qibla and the struggle tradition**

The precise relationship between Pagad and radical Islamic groups such as Qibla is, as we have seen, bitterly disputed. It is impossible for us to draw any conclusions on the subject from the data at our disposal. Nevertheless it is hard to deny that the divisions within the Muslim population of the Cape opened up during the violent death throes of apartheid may help to explain why a popular movement against gangsterism and drugs, supported by many ordinary Muslim people, might have attracted political activists from Qibla and other like-minded organisations. Several respondents suggested that the hegemony of a traditionally conservative and politically quiescent leadership - tarnished by its over-

accommodating attitude towards the country's apartheid rulers - was broken during the struggle years as more highly politicised charterists and Islamic radicals either joined or aligned themselves with one or other of the liberation movements. If this was indeed the case, it is unremarkable that both the issue of crime, gangsterism and drugs, and the popular movement built around it, became sites of political struggle once liberation had been achieved.

That the membership of Pagad and Qibla overlaps should come as no surprise to anyone - and least of all to the seasoned political activists who now occupy senior positions in government. No political group worth its salt - and few self-respecting political activists - confronted with the opportunity that Pagad presented (say) to Qibla could have resisted the temptation to work within such a mass movement in the long term interests of the party.<sup>43</sup> At a time when the post-liberation leadership of South African Islam was at stake, no organisation in Pagad's position could have remained untainted by politics for long. Nor is it outrageous to speculate as we have done earlier in this report that those members of Qibla who joined Pagad brought with them a sense of political purpose - and organisational skills to match - that would enable the organisation to survive the hard years that followed the honeymoon months of early 1996. Thus here too, in the development of Pagad itself, it is possible to see a connection with the violence of the struggle years, firstly in the ideological form of a distinctively South African strain of Islamic radicalism and secondly in the more substantial shape of the organisational skills needed to popularise that ideology and turn it into a political programme.

#### **Hammers and nails: the state of the State**

The terms of the negotiated settlement that paved the way for the 1994 elections and the harsh realities of exercising State power meant that the ANC-dominated government of national unity had little choice but to rely on personnel inherited from its predecessor. Unpopular, mistrusted and compromised by their past as many of them were, the new government had no new police force, no ready-made intelligence service, waiting in the wings to do its bidding. This continuity of personnel explains - at least in part - the persistence into the democratic era of strategies tried and tested during the apartheid years. With four decades and more experience of justifying their suppression by tarring the ANC and its allies with the brush of communism, the default response of the post-apartheid security services was similarly constructed on the twin pillars of propaganda and repression.

Pagad was a thorn in the flesh of the authorities and the authorities needed ... to portray the stereotype of an organisation that was opposed to the State. And if you are opposed to the State, this legitimate State, then anybody will say yes, the State is justified in taking action against these individuals. But what people didn't realise - and this was unfortunately the democratic government acting on the prejudices that [had] been built into peoples' minds by the apartheid system. And that is that, if you wear a uniform then you are correct and you are operating within the law. [But] if you do not wear a uniform and you take any action, then you are unlawful and that is where ... people justified action against Pagad (R4, 6 June 2000).

Long-accustomed to reaching for their familiar hammers the security forces saw Pagad as

just another nail - a threat to the authority of the new State much like the UDF, the ANC and the rest had been to the old.

### **Reconciliation: impact and prospects**

Inasmuch as the violence that has wracked the Western Cape since 1996 is cyclical both in its relationship with earlier conflicts connected to the foundation and destruction of apartheid, and in the sense that one round of violence within the present cycle seems to spark another, the primary aim of any reconciliation process must be to break into those cycles thus reducing the chances of violence recurring. Judged against this yardstick, the history of attempts at reconciliation between the (often literally) warring parties on the Cape Flats is a depressing litany of failures and missed opportunities.

#### ***Truth, reconciliation and the TRC***

The evidence presented in this report is minuscule in comparison with that of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (TRC).<sup>44</sup> Yet it captures something implicit in the TRC's work - the near-impossibility of constructing a single, objective 'truth' from multiple, subjective 'truths'. With this in mind we do not intend to join those who damn the whole TRC process for revealing little of what actually happened under apartheid, and leading to no more than a superficial reconciliation between the social forces represented by those who fought for and against it.

However, the process of national reconciliation embodied in the TRC seems to have left large areas of the Western Cape, and millions of people, virtually untouched. The 1999 elections and their aftermath revealed the politics of the province to be as virulently racialised and the tactics of 'swart gevaar' almost, but not quite, as brutally effective as ever. Cape Town itself remains - notwithstanding the 'greying' of some (hitherto exclusively white) middle class areas - a city divided against itself. Nor has the spirit of reconciliation touched the reformed gangsters we interviewed in the way they hoped back in 1994. While police officers have received amnesty for crimes committed in the name of apartheid, they - its victims - still find themselves on the wrong side of the law thus adding to their sense of betrayal by a government they supported and believe to be in their debt. From the gangsters' viewpoint, the process of grand reconciliation following the demise of apartheid did too little to resolve the peculiar problems of the Western Cape. But, conversely, it may also have done too much by entrenching the positions of shop-soiled old order bureaucrats ill-equipped to deal with the problems of a new democratic era and prone to resort to the stereotyped thinking and failed tactics of the past.

#### ***Reconciliation on the Cape Flats***

If the TRC-led process of national reconciliation seems to have passed the Cape by, its shortcomings have scarcely been made good by repeated attempts at reconciliation - or at least negotiation - between the major players involved in the continuing violence on the Cape Flats. To our knowledge no fewer than three sets of talks have taken place between Pagad and the State alone in the period since 1996. Repeated attempts to resolve the problems of gang and vigilante violence by talking rather than by shooting, bombing, prosecuting and imprisoning have broken down amidst a barrage of mutual recrimination. All the key players we talked to - police, Pagad, anti-crime activists, observers and



reformed gangsters - proclaim their commitment to ending the violence. Each of them believes that they have a significant, even essential, part to play in reaching that goal. Where they differ - bitterly and apparently irreconcilably - is over how they can, and indeed whether they should, co-operate to achieve that common objective. Moreover, the task of resolving these differences is made more difficult than it might otherwise be by the mutual antipathy and distrust that has grown up between the various parties with each suspecting the others of duplicity and bad faith in their approach to the various rounds of talks that have taken place.

So, for example, a fragile transitional State views street gangsters, organised crime syndicates, armed vigilantes and civil society anti-crime groups as, to varying degrees, a threat to its jealously guarded monopoly on the use of legitimate coercive force. Under severe pressure to live up to its billing as the ultimate guarantor of social order, negotiation can be interpreted as a sign of weakness, an admission that the State - in Hobbesian terms - is unable to stop the war of all against all. To people in Pagad, surveying the desolation in their communities, the failure of the State to break the hold of the gangs is proof of its incompetence and venality while the organisation's experience of negotiation is embittered by memories of provocation and double-dealing. With the State inactive and untrustworthy and other anti-crime groups naïve enough to believe that gangsters and drug dealers can be cajoled into changing rather than confronted with the necessity for change, they believe that Pagad, and Pagad alone, stands between good people, the good community, and chaos.

As for the reformed gangsters, they are pained at the State's scepticism about the sincerity of their conversion to the path of righteousness and disillusioned by the failure of the 'black' government to deliver on its promises either to them as individuals or to the marginalised 'bruinmense' who they, like Pagad, claim in some way to represent. Meanwhile, even those anti-crime groups with an instinctive commitment to reconciliation hesitate to talk to people who bring guns to the negotiating table or whose commitment to working in a genuine partnership with civil society has waned with their acquisition of State power.

### *Prospects for peace*

If this analysis is anywhere near correct, the prospects for reconciliation are bleak. All sides seem set on achieving their common goal using their own methods and with nothing but fear, distrust or contempt for what others are doing. However, before we dismiss the possibility of reconciliation entirely, let us look very briefly at the alternatives.

### **Prevention, policing and criminal justice reform**

Bitterly critical of its present role as they are, Pagad, other anti-crime groups and the reformed gangsters all recognise the centrality of the State to solving the problem of violence. Despite regular, and increasingly plaintive, appeals for the community to join it in a partnership against crime and violence, the State continues to see rigorous enforcement as the answer to the problem. Legislation on asset forfeiture and the prevention of organised crime has given the State a battery of new powers to use against crime syndicates and individual gang leaders. In recent months new anti-terrorism laws have been drafted in response to the bombings in the Western Cape. Urban terror is also amongst the list of most serious offences to be investigated by the new elite Scorpions unit under the direct supervision of a ministerial committee headed by the President (Cape Times, 3.8.2000). As



one of our respondents indicated, the emphasis on intelligence-led policing may be greater now than it was four years ago, but more and better policing (with prosecution and imprisonment to follow for those found responsible for violence) remains the dominant theme in the State's response.

### *The enforcement option*

This is not the place to debate the merits either of recent legislation or of the creation of elite investigative units in any detail. The potential difficulties with a conventional law enforcement approach are not remediable simply by passing more penal statutes and hiring more people to enforce them. The first point is that all of these steps are aimed at improving the reactive, rather than the preventive capacity of the State. Of course, efficient bandit-catching may have a preventive effect, but it is a less certain and more expensive form of prevention than other strategies targeted more directly at the causes of crime.<sup>45</sup> This brings us to the second point, the perennial problems of capacity and resources. Does the State have the wherewithal needed to make the new legislation work and ensure that routine policing - the point at which most people actually experience policing as a service - is not robbed of resources so as to fund the activities of new elites invisible to the ordinary person?

There is also the apparent inability of the security services to operate effectively within constitutional constraints. Whether it is because - as the police and other enforcement agencies like to assert - their hands are tied by over-elaborate procedural requirements designed to safeguard the rights of suspects or because they have failed to grasp the basic principles of democratic law enforcement, the fact is that the security forces do not have much to show for four years of often frenzied activity and a bewildering succession of special operations. Pagad may have been decapitated by the incarceration of its leaders, yet few if any of them have actually been convicted of a serious offence. Equally disturbing is evidence - confirmed by our respondents - that senior security service personnel remain divided about the nature and seriousness of the urban terror problem and the wisdom of continuing with a strategy that relies so heavily on enforcement. Worse still are the persistent doubts about the integrity of the police. The suspicion that elements attached to (if not actually inside) the security and intelligence apparatus are implicated in acts of urban terror is not limited to a lunatic fringe of conspiracy theorists, and public knowledge of the historic links between senior figures in the police and leading gangsters is widespread.

Our view is that better trained and equipped investigators who know their way around the mass of new legislation passed since 1994, and have grown up with the rigours of constitutional policing, may be able to overcome some of these obstacles. Law-making and police reorganisation may provide some temporary respite from the problems of gangsterism and vigilantism. However, they are unlikely to resolve those problems in the long term because they fail even to begin to tackle the roots of the violence. Certainly the prospects for the successful implementation of a strategy based on rigorous enforcement and clever propaganda are not good. In spite of resorting to methods far beyond the pale of constitutional democracy, the apartheid government was unable to resolve the security crisis engendered by its own policies. The construction of a de facto police State and almost total control of the media were not enough to control the anger of the disenfranchised majority.

What is more, perhaps the most striking lesson to be learnt from the 'terror' of 1998 is that enforcement - in the draconian form of the extra-judicial execution of leading gangsters - does not provide a long term solution to the problem of gangsterism.<sup>46</sup> As one of our respondents argued in a passage quoted earlier, the liquidation of one tier of leaders may well have led to a potentially dangerous change in gang structure and to the current upsurge in gang violence.<sup>47</sup> In much the same way, the removal by incarceration of many prominent members of Pagad leaders is unlikely to resolve the corresponding problem of vigilantism. With its tradition of collective leadership, we have no doubt that Pagad will continue to exist - even if it does not exactly thrive - as long as the problems of gangsterism and drugs persist.

### **Alternatives**

The implications of these arguments are clear. Enforcement alone will not solve the problems of vigilante violence and revenge killing in the Western Cape. Reforming the criminal justice system may be a necessary condition for peace since it is hard to deny that some measure of public confidence in the integrity and efficiency of the security services must return before the current impasse in relations between the State, Pagad and everyone else can be broken. Equally, criminal justice reforms alone will not suffice. We will give some indication of what else needs to be done at the end of this report. But first we must return very briefly to the three hypotheses referred to in CSVr's briefing when contracting this research.

### **Conclusions**

#### **Three hypotheses**

The narrative evidence and analysis presented in this report allows us to draw only tentative conclusions about the changing nature of violence in post-transitional societies, the impact of change on reconciliation processes and the overlapping identities of victims and offenders.

#### ***The changing nature of violence***

Undoubtedly the nature of violence does change when its focus shifts from liberation to the distribution of the fruits of freedom after a formal transition to democracy has been accomplished. Once the goal of liberation has been achieved, the unity forged in struggle soon breaks down. Old alliances dissolve, or become sources not of strength but embarrassment. New relationships in a negotiated transition can be forged between ancient enemies. Attitudes towards violence and characterisations of it as criminal or political also change in transitional and post-transitional societies.

[T]here was a criminalisation of politics under the old government. And under the new government we [have] had the politicisation of crime where crime ... has become an intensely political issue.<sup>48</sup>

This happens, above all, because State power, and with it the power to redraw the boundaries of the criminal, changes hands. At the same time, the exercise of State power

also becomes more tightly circumscribed by new constitutional safeguards and responses to crime and political dissent more closely regulated by procedural rules. Limited as it was, our research found evidence of all these changes and more at work in the Western Cape where, broadly as hypothesised, the nature of violence has changed but not - at least not necessarily - its extent.

### *Post-transitional reconciliation*

In these circumstances, it is unlikely that processes of reconciliation designed to heal the wounds opened in the fight for democracy will suffice once democracy has been established. On liberation, the parties to the process - a State that could no longer sustain itself and a liberation movement prepared to acknowledge its inability to triumph by force of arms - were of roughly equal strength. They were able to determine the rules of the reconciliation game more or less for themselves during the extended period of political interregnum that preceded the 1994 elections. What we are confronted with in the Western Cape today is, by contrast, a bewildering array of competing interests - organised and disorganised, legitimate and illegitimate, armed and unarmed - the most powerful of which is a transitional (and by no means omnipotent) State bound to play by the still unfamiliar rules of constitutional democracy. Until all those involved recognise - as the parties to South Africa's negotiated settlement did - that the fight against gangsterism, vigilantism or urban terrorism cannot and should not be won, reconciliation will remain a chimera.

### *Gangsters are victims too<sup>49</sup>*

One reason why fighting talk and the language of battle, victory and defeat are so dangerous is suggested by the third hypothesis. For it is only possible to see the elimination of an opponent as a desirable goal if the essential humanity of that opponent is denied. One very powerful way of undermining an opponent's claim to humanity is to emphasise his/her otherness or inhumanity by branding him/her a criminal or an outlaw no longer deserving of the consideration to which the law-abiding are entitled. This process of distancing and denial was evident in much of what we heard from our respondents. Pagad's construction of the drug dealer as the enemy of the community, an incubus to be expelled, was perhaps the most explicit example of this. However, it was also implicit in the State's brutally effective labelling of Qibla and, by association, Pagad as fundamentalist and, therefore, part of some hydra-headed global conspiracy.

Yet, running counter to these (often successful) attempts at demonisation is another body of evidence we collected. This indicates that - as the third hypothesis suggests - it is possible to be an offender and a victim at one and the same time: a victim of apartheid social engineering and a gangster; an armed vigilante and a parent afraid for a young family growing up in gangland; or a police official with unsuitable friends and illicit sources of income unable to survive on what the State can afford to pay and terrified of the consequences of breaking free of the gangsters' embrace.

### **Preventing violence: the way ahead?**

Coming up with our own prescriptions for reducing levels of violence in the Western Cape goes some way beyond the scope of this report. So we will be brief and confine ourselves to no more than two observations, both of which flow from what we have argued elsewhere in

this report.

Firstly - and notwithstanding the many obstacles in the way of reconciliation - we believe that the alternative to some form of constructive engagement between the State, Pagad, other anti-crime organisations, gangsters (unreformed as well as reformed) and the ordinary people who have to live under gang rule is more violence. Wars on crime, whoever the combatants may be (e.g. State agents or freelance assassins) are rarely, if ever, winnable. The wars against gangsterism and vigilantism currently being waged in the Western Cape are no exceptions to this rule. We are convinced that negotiations of some sort are therefore the only way forward - at least in the short term.

In the longer term - and this brings us to our second point - something must be done about the social conditions in which gangsterism has taken root. One of many similarities between Pagad and the State in their approach to gangsterism is an apparent unwillingness to see it not as a manifestation of individual greed and wickedness, but in its wider social context. There is nothing inevitable about a young man growing up in a place like Manenberg joining a gang. However, to say that it is as easy to avoid the Hard Livings and ignore the rewards of gang membership in Manenberg as it is in Kenwyn (let alone Constantia) is nonsense.<sup>50</sup> Speaking of Pagad - though his words are equally applicable to the State - one of our respondents put it like this:

[W]hat Pagad didn't have was a programme for the re-development of the communities. Whilst it had grand ideas about getting rid of drug dealers, which united people, what it needed to complement that with was a programme of action to re-build communities. Development work is always more difficult than sloganising - always more difficult (R2, 6 April 2000).

Later in the interview the same respondent summed up the long-term challenge of dealing with the roots of violence in words that we find hard to improve upon.

[T]he gangs understand the [socio-economic] conditions [within the communities] far better than the politicians. They know when to provide things for the communities, and so the communities understand that if the police come, the police will come and they will go. But the gangs will remain. If social workers come, social workers will come and go. But the gangs will remain. And members in those poverty-stricken communities know that. They understand that time is longer than rope, and that the gangs will always be with them. And unless we break that symbiotic [relationship] that the gangs have with the communities, then we won't win this fight. And we can only break that by creating more jobs, by making the community less dependent on gangs, by creating a new culture in this community, of responsibility, of leadership. If we don't do that, then the gangs will continue to grow because more layers of people and more young people will join their ranks. The schools are unattractive for ... people to go to, and there's more money to be made there in the gangs (R2, 6 April 2000).

Our final point is therefore not to suggest that gangsterism will quietly melt away if poverty and alienation are tackled effectively, but to suggest that the symbiotic relationship between

gang and community cannot be broken by force. Loosening the economic and social bonds that constitute this relationship will take time. But it will only happen when people have some grounds for believing that that 'time' is not longer than 'rope' and that they will not have to wait forever for the jobs, schools, services, and social infrastructure that would allow them to become full citizens of a democratic South Africa.

### **Postscript**

Since work on this report was completed in early August 2000 violence has returned to the streets of Cape Town with a vengeance. Bombs have been going off from Constantia to Gatesville. The Western Cape's first citizen has narrowly avoided serious injury. A prominent member of the judiciary has been assassinated. Suburban shopping malls, gay bars, busy city centre streets, student cafés and the offices of political parties have all been targeted.

Leading politicians and senior figures in law enforcement have been quick to blame Pagad for this latest upsurge in what is now routinely referred to as 'urban terror'. Safety and Security Minister Steve Tshwete has said that the police 'are not looking anywhere else' for the people behind the bombings (*Business Day*, 12.9.2000). All that remains is for the information the security forces already have at their disposal to be turned into evidence and put before the courts.

Pronouncements to this effect by Tshwete and his colleague at the Department of Justice, Penuell Maduna, have not gone unchallenged however. Opposition parties across the political spectrum have lambasted the government for failing either to present hard evidence of Pagad's involvement or to bring those responsible for the bombings to book (*Cape Times*, 13.9.2000; *Business Day*, 13.9.2000a). Academics and media commentators have been equally sceptical about ministerial claims that the case against Pagad is overwhelming.<sup>51</sup> Pagad meanwhile has condemned attacks such as the bombing of the Constantia Village shopping complex and threatened legal action against those who accuse the organisation of being behind the violence.

Recent media reporting of the number of urban terror cases outstanding - or already decided - against Pagad and its members suggests that the authorities are not going to take these criticisms lying down (*Cape Argus*, 11.10.2000). Widely reported accounts of the activities of the G-force's Grassy Park cell presented by a National Intelligence Agency informer at the trial of four leading members of Pagad seem to lend further weight to the case against the organisation (*Cape Argus*, 10.10.2000).

Testimony given under oath by informers in open court and the publication of lists of Pagad supporters who have been found guilty of urban terror-related offences or have cases pending against them certainly gives some substance to ministerial claims that Pagad - and Pagad alone - is responsible for the bombings and shootings of the last two years. But it is by no means conclusive evidence of their involvement. The four men alleged to have been active in the Grassy Park cell of the G-force have not been found guilty of anything as yet and the truth of the allegations against them largely untested. Of the sixteen Pagad members and supporters who have been convicted of so-called 'urban terrorism', more than half faced charges relating to the illegal possession of explosives, firearms and ammunition rather than their use. In the two cases where activists were found guilty of murder, the

intended targets for their actions were people believed to be drug dealers or gangsters and their associates.<sup>52</sup>

The research reported here is equally inconclusive. It would be idle of us to speculate about the extent to which Pagad, its members and supporters are involved in urban terror based on the interview and other data we were able to collect. What we can say is that we find the term 'urban terror' itself distinctly unhelpful. At best it is a piece of convenient journalistic shorthand for offences that range from the illegal possession of firearms and ammunition to motor vehicle theft and murder. Particularly important in our view are the closely related questions of motivation and target selection. Why are certain individuals, institutions or locations attacked? And how plausible is Pagad's involvement given Pagad's known social and/or political objectives?

Analysed in this way, the violence of the last five years seems to have been directed against at least four distinct types of target:

1. gangsters, drug dealers, their associates and places (including some ostensibly legitimate businesses) used for, or as fronts for, drug-dealing or gang-related activities;
2. government buildings such as police stations and individual State agents involved in the investigation or adjudication of cases involving Pagad or its members;
3. places such as synagogues, theme restaurants or gay bars that symbolise either the international economic and ideological hegemony of America, the West and the Judaeo-Christian tradition or the new-won constitutional protections enjoyed by social groups who fall foul of the conservative social morality associated with radical Islam, and
4. 'soft' targets - shopping centres, restaurants, coffee shops, city streets and so on - that have no obvious connection with either the explicit social, or assumed political, agenda of Pagad or radical Islam.

There are, of course, difficulties with taking such an analysis too far and the categorisation of any given incident is likely to be controversial on the basis of evidence in the public domain. But what it does provide is some critical purchase on the plausibility of the State's claim that there is no need to look beyond Pagad for the perpetrators of urban terror whatever its target may be. So, for example it allows us to distinguish between, on the one hand, attacks on restaurants, shopping centres and other 'soft' targets which Pagad has publicly condemned and are difficult to connect to any of its stated objectives and, on the other, armed action against drug dealers for which Pagad has not claimed direct responsibility but evidently believes to be socially beneficial.

By the same token, the large number of cases either heard or pending against Pagad supporters in connection with attacks on drug dealers may suggest - if only on a no-smoke-without-fire basis - that the group's members are not averse to using violence against people they know or suspect are involved in gangsterism. But this does not mean that we should accept without question the claim made by National Director of Public Prosecutions,



Bulelani Ngcuka, that the bombing of two gay bars (the Blah Bar in November 1999 and the Bronx in August last year) 'make[s] sense in Pagad's terms because homosexuality is condemned by Islam' or that other, apparently motiveless attacks on an up-market shopping complex and a student café can be explained by their coincidence with the appearance of Pagad members in court (Business Day, 13.9.2000b).

While we do not have access to the intelligence reports that, we assume, lead Mr Tshwete, his ministerial colleagues and senior officials like Mr Ngcuka to conclude that Pagad are to blame for all the violence of the second half of last year (and much more over the preceding four and a half years), we find such a broad proposition both intuitively unattractive and profoundly unhelpful. It is, in essence, an appeal not to a greater understanding of violence and its origins but to less. Yet, if we learnt nothing else from our research, it was that the origins of violence are rarely either simple or clear. For the time being at least, we remain firmly agnostic on the nature and extent of Pagad's involvement in urban terror but convinced that the use of that term should not in itself become an obstacle to understanding the complex social dynamic underlying recent events in the Western Cape.

## References

Africa, C., Christie, J., Mattes, R., Roefs, M., & Taylor, H. (1998). Crime and community action: Pagad and the Cape Flats, 1996 - 1997. *Public Opinion Service Report No 4*. Cape Town: [IDASA](#).

*Agence France Presse*. (1996, 10 August). Police rein in Islamic militants in anti- gang wars.

Barr, R., & Pease, K. (1990). Crime Placement, Displacement and Deflection. In N. Morris & M. Tonry (Eds.) *Crime and justice: a review of research*, 12. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brantingham, P.J., & Faust, L. (1976). A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention. *Crime and Delinquency*, 22: 284-96.

Brogden, M., & Shearing, C. (1993). *Policing for a New South Africa*. London: Routledge.

*Business Day*. (2000, 12 September). Evidence of terror points to Pagad.

*Business Day*. (2000a, 13 September). Ngcuka outlines strategy to combat bombings.

*Business Day*. (2000b, 13 September). Opposition attacks govt over terrorism.

*Cape Argus*. (2000, 9 February). Pagad witnesses 'afraid to testify'.

*Cape Argus*. (2000, 10 October). Inside Pagad's G-force.

*Cape Argus*. (2000, 11 October). The cases against Pagad.

*Cape Argus*. (1996, 20 December). Pagad now part of the crime problem says police chief.

*Cape Times*, (2000, 17 March). Planned assassination of Omar called off by CCB after his heart attack - Van Zyl.

*Cape Times*. (2000, 22 May). Arrests after Pagad shoot-out.

*Cape Times*. (2000, 3 August). New laws to tackle bombers: Mbeki to lead ministerial committee which will guide work of Scorpions Unit.

*Cape Times*. (2000, 14 September). Witch-hunt will not stop bombings.

*Cape Times*. (2000, 13 September). Maduna: Libyan-trained guerillas behind bombings.

*Cape Times*. (1997, 24 September). Wrong target relives ordeal.

*Cape Times*. (2000, 11 October). Court told of pipe bombs.

Carter, C., & Mertens, M. (1998, 17 November). The fast life and hard death of Jackie Lonte. *Electronic Mail & Guardian*.

Carter, C., & Merten, M. (1998, 20 November). Cops bungle raid on Pagad house. *Mail & Guardian*.

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. (1998). *Funding Proposal: Transition, Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa*.

Chandler N. (1999, 23 January). Government unveils tough anti-terror law. *The Star*.

Cohen, S. (1996). Crime and politics: spot the difference? *British Journal of Sociology*, 47, 1, 1-19.

Damon, J., & Davids, R. (1998a, 31 December). Great pain, no gains in 'the most ruthless year'. *Cape Times*.

Damon, J., & Davids, R. (1998b, 31 December). Girls' crossfire deaths shock. *Cape Times*.

Duffy, A. (1997, 24 - 30 October). Police linked to Cape war. *Mail & Guardian*.

Duffy, A. (1998, 30 January - 5 February). Blue line buckles in gangland. *Mail & Guardian*.

*Electronic Mail & Guardian*. (1999, 12 January). Cops brace for violence as Pagad man dies.

*Financial Mail*. (1996, 22 November). Pagad: curious support.

*Financial Times Online*. (1996, 16 August). Radical Islam: The Pagad connection.

Friedman, R. (1996, 25 October). Violence will not be tolerated - police get tough on



Pagad. *Cape Times*.

Friedman, R. (1998, 16 February). The roots of Cape gangsterism: from back streets to business empires. *Cape Times*.

Galant, R. & Gamielien, F. (Eds.). (1996). *Drugs, Gangs, People's Power: Exploring the Pagad Phenomenon*. Cape Town: Claremont Main Road Masjid.

Gastrow, P. (1998). Organised crime in South Africa. *ISS Monograph Series No 28*. Halfway House: Institute for Security Studies

Golding-Duffy, J. (1996, 16 August). Cape journos work in fear. *Mail & Guardian*.

Hadland, A. (2000, 12 September). Mr Fixit turns talent to magic with numbers. *Cape Argus*.

Haffajee, F. (2000, 21 January). Pagad, Muslims and the Scorpions. *Interactive Financial Mail*.

Jacobs, J. (1997, 23 October). Pagad pulls out of talks: group wants list of concerns addressed. *Saturday Argus*.

Kinnes, I. (2000). From urban street gangs to criminal empires: the changing face of gangs in the Western Cape. [\*ISS Monograph Series No 48\*](#). Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

Knemeyer, T. (1996, 15 August). Nach dem Ende der Apartheid verschafft sich Allah Gehör. *Die Welt*.

Le May, J. (1998, 19 February). Gangs to be illegal under new law. *Cape Argus*.

Leggett, T. (2000, 15 - 21 September). Tshwete is barking up wrong tree. *Mail & Guardian*.

Ludski, H., & van Zilla, L. (1996, 23 September). *Cape Times*.

Merten M., & Ngobeni, E. (13 August 1999). Cops sold weapons to Pagad. *Mail & Guardian*.

Nina, D. (2000). [Dirty Harry is back: Vigilantism in South Africa - The \(re\)emergence of the 'good' and 'bad' community](#). *African Security Review*, 9, 1, 18-28.

Oliver, P. (1997, 14 December). Police ID found at drug house. *Sunday Argus*.

Pagad website. [On-line]. Available Internet: <http://www.pagad.co.za>

Pillay, S. (2000). Problematizing the making of good and evil: gangs and Pagad. Paper presented to the Third Crossroads in Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 21 - 25 June 2000.

Schärf, W. (1989). Community Policing in South Africa. *Acta Juridica*, 206-33.

Schärf, W. (1990). The resurgence of urban street gangs and community responses in Cape Town during the late eighties. In D. Hansson & D. van Zyl Smit (Eds.). *Towards Justice? Crime and State Control in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Schönteich, M. (1999). [How organised is the state's response to organised crime?](#) *African Security Review*, 8, 2, 3-12.

Smith, A. (1999, 13 April). Businessmen speak out on gang hitlist. *Cape Argus*.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (1998). [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report](#).

*The Star*. (1997, 7 May). Pagad slams gangster crime plan; This too echoes an old 'struggle' slogan.

*The Star*. (1999, 6 January). Cape police take tough line on urban terrorism.

*The Star*. (1999, 8 January). Police running smear campaign - Pagad.

*Sunday Times*. (1999, 16 May). Police foil Pagad plan to disrupt elections.

Thiel, G. (1997, 4 April). Drug lords aim at political power. *Electronic Mail & Guardian*.

van Zilla, L. (1998, 10 February). Gang war erupts in Manenberg. *Cape Times*.

Vernon K. (1998, 18 January). Pagad's power dissipated by internal split. *Sunday Times*.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> To avoid cluttering the text with intrusive punctuation we use terms like 'revenge violence', 'urban terror' and 'vigilantism' and their derivatives without the addition of inverted commas. We acknowledge that these terms have become ideologically and politically loaded and our use of them in this way does not imply that we have any particular view as to their applicability to the activities of any organisation or individual. Although it may be possible to treat revenge violence and vigilantism as distinct phenomena, we will use the two terms more or less interchangeably here.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth emphasising here that the gang members we spoke to both claim to have given up their old ways. Much to the chagrin of the individuals concerned the police and members of rival gangs treat these claims with some scepticism. We however will take them at face value and refer to our respondents as reformed gangsters. It goes without saying that particular caution should be taken in treating what these individuals say as representative of (unreformed) gangsters generally.

<sup>3</sup> As we shall argue later in this report, the tenacity with which these multiple truths are believed in as the only truth is one of the main obstacles to reconciliation. Thus we use the

word truth or truths (rather than, say, perspective(s)) here not out of any commitment to relativism but as a means of conveying the depth and sincerity of the conviction with which competing, often mutually contradictory, accounts or narratives are believed.

<sup>4</sup> See Kinnes (2000) for a recent example of this approach with an emphasis on the development of what the author calls an 'illegitimate opportunity structure' in the Western Cape.

<sup>5</sup> Pillay (2000) rightly observes that the area commonly known as the Cape Flats is by no means culturally, socially or economically homogenous (p.20). We use it in this report as a convenient shorthand term for the main areas of settlement of the coloured (another problematic term) diaspora recognising both that places like Mitchells Plain and Grassy Park are not uniformly working class and that the, again so-called, black townships of Langa, Guguletu, Nyanga and Khayelitsha are also located on the Flats, and are also the product of apartheid social engineering.

<sup>6</sup> For a much more detailed and ambitious analysis of Pagad in the context of Islamic politics both globally and in South Africa see Pillay (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Qibla, for example, supported the Black Consciousness Movement and Pan Africanist Congress during the struggle era and rejected the ANC's support for a negotiated settlement (Omar in Galant & Gamielien, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> A sense of coloured nationalism ('ons is 'n nasie') was evident in the reformed gangsters' repeated references to 'die bruinmense' as a distinct, and distinctly disadvantaged, group.

<sup>9</sup> Schärf (1990), Gastrow (1998) and Kinnes (2000) have all argued from slightly different perspectives that even if the number of gangs (and/or gang members) did not suddenly increase as South Africa emerged from authoritarianism and isolation critical changes did occur in the internal structure and organisation of established gangs such as the Americans and the Hard Livings, and in the relationship between street gangs and more sophisticated criminal organisations operating both within South Africa and internationally. One estimate by a seasoned media commentator has put the total number of gangsters in the Cape at between 35 000 and 80 000 and the number of identifiable gangs at well over 100 (Friedman, 1998). Less sober press estimates of gang membership range from 100 000 to 400 000.

<sup>10</sup> Pagad has subsequently used slogans such as 'one [drug] merchant one bullet' freely adapted from the PAC's famous call during the struggle years for 'one settler, one bullet' (Thiel, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise stated all quotations in this section of the report ('Pagad's story') are from our interview with a spokesperson from Pagad (R4) held on 6 June 2000. Pagad's homepage is at <http://www.pagad.co.za>

<sup>12</sup> See Nina (2000) for more on Pagad and the notion of the 'good community'.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.pagad.co.za/past.htm> (25 July 2000)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.pagad.co.za/past.htm> (25 July 2000)

<sup>15</sup> The notion of collective leadership appears to survive to this today if our experience of arranging an interview with Pagad is anything to go by. The decision to take part in the research seems to have been taken collectively and the individual we eventually interviewed was deliberately self-effacing making it clear that he was only one of several people authorised to speak on behalf of Pagad and enjoyed no particular status in the organisation beyond that.

<sup>16</sup> See *Cape Times*, 6 August 1996, for Parker's reported statement and below for more on Pagad's alleged hidden political agenda.

<sup>17</sup> The quotation is from Pagad's vision statement at <http://www.pagad.co.za/vision.htm> (25 July 2000).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.pagad.co.za/past.htm> (25 July 2000)

<sup>19</sup> Pagad held numerous rallies at Vygieskraal Stadium and other venues in Athlone and across the Cape Flats in 1996.

<sup>20</sup> In late 1996, the government made it known that an old piece of legislation preventing the wearing of disguises would be enforced against Pagad activists wearing masks in public places.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the report was based on police figures and went on to attribute 188 acts of urban terror - including shootings and pipe- and petrol-bombings - to Pagad and 479 to the gangs.

<sup>22</sup> 'Girls' crossfire deaths shock', loc cit.

<sup>23</sup> The discrepancy between the two figures - thirteen and fifteen - mentioned in this quotation and the eleven deaths referred to in the Cape Times article can probably be put down to definitional differences about who to count as a gang leader and/or seen as no more than a slip of the tongue on the part of our respondent.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.pagad.co.za/> (25 July 2000) With a revision date of 19 March 2000 the reference to 'recent' terror attacks cannot refer to incidents such as the Planet Hollywood bombing of August 1998 but their flat condemnation of this kind of action clearly illustrates the contrast between Pagad's unsympathetic attitude towards attacks on gangsters and their apparent revulsion at violence directed at other targets.

<sup>25</sup> Pillay (2000) suggests that Pagad is led by a single enigmatic figure who appears at meetings wearing a scarf and is addressed as 'amir' or 'leader' by members (p. 19). The presence of such a figurehead is not necessarily inconsistent with our view that, for reasons

that have as much to do with the organisation's survival as any principled commitment to collectivism, day-to-day decision-making is in the hands of a group of people rather than any one individual.

<sup>26</sup> Africa, Christie, Mattes, Roefs & Taylor (1998).

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.pagad.co.za/aims.htm> (25 July 2000).

<sup>28</sup> The IUC is an umbrella organisation for many smaller radical Islamic groups (a membership of more than 200 is claimed but hotly disputed) opposed to the traditional leadership of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC).

<sup>29</sup> Unlike the Pagad spokesperson, the two individuals we spoke to were not nominated by the security forces to provide an official account of the State's views on Pagad. What follows is therefore a personal viewpoint. However, as we said in the introduction, we do not believe that their narrative is either wholly idiosyncratic or unrepresentative of at least one strand of official truth.

<sup>30</sup> All quotations in this section of narrative are taken from our interview with R8 on 14 April 2000 unless stated otherwise. The nature of the data we collected from this interview and the conversation with R7 (6 April 2000) does not lend itself to quite such extensive direct quotation as the material reproduced in the Pagad narrative. But we have attempted as far as possible to capture the sense of what we were told in the text that follows.

<sup>31</sup> R8, 14 April 2000.

<sup>32</sup> For the last year or so the security forces have worked hard to resolve these tensions between the intelligence and investigative functions by encouraging informers to become witnesses. However, as our respondent conceded, problems remain - not least with a witness protection programme that continues to offer a less than satisfactory lifestyle to those unable to return to their communities.

<sup>33</sup> The installation of CCTV in Manenberg is a recent development that our respondents referred to with disgust on several occasions. In reality the scheme is likely to be funded not by government but by Business Against Crime but the point about the reactive, retributive emphasis of State policy remains clear enough.

<sup>34</sup> Although Pagad's popular appeal was rooted in fears about high levels of crime and the perceived inadequacy of the State's response, these factors alone were probably not enough to prompt people either to join or support Pagad even in these early years. Opinion surveys conducted by IDASA in August/September 1996 and April 1997 suggested that people who support radical collective action, support Pagad or join Pagad are distinguished as much by identity and identity-related values, and identity-related evaluations as they are by feeling unsafe or disapproving of law enforcement institutions (Africa et al., 1998: 2, emphasis in original).

<sup>35</sup> Incidentally it is worth noting here that Pagad's complaints of media bias against them

are mirrored by police frustration at what they perceive to be negative reporting of their efforts and Pagad's corresponding success in painting themselves as the innocent victims of oppressive, anti-Muslim, apartheid-style policing.

<sup>36</sup> R2, 6 April 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Gastrow (1998) provides something close to an official view of the threat posed by organised crime but with a distinctly Capetonian slant; and see Schönteich (1999) for an account of the government's legislative travails ending with the much amended and still widely criticised Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998.

<sup>38</sup> See Schärf (1989) and Brogden & Shearing (1993, chapter 4) for accounts of the racially discriminatory security-oriented policing that became a feature of the closing years of the apartheid era.

<sup>39</sup> No-one now seriously disputes that the security forces worked closely with gangsters during this period. Recent revelations before an amnesty committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) merely confirm the extent of the co-operation and the lengths to which its agents were prepared to go in order to eliminate enemies of the State. For example, at a hearing held in Cape Town early last year, former Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) operative, Abram 'Slang' van Zyl, told the committee about his part in a plot to hire a gangster known as 'Peaches' to assassinate the then chairperson of the United Democratic Front in the Western Cape (and now Minister of Transport), Dullah Omar (*Cape Times*, 17 March 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Even this was no guarantee that politicians would be allowed to do as they pleased. One incident we were told about involved a group of leading ANC figures being stoned on a visit to Manenberg while the intervention of a leading gangster and ANC loyalist failed to dissuade another local gang from taking violent exception to the presence of politicians on their turf (R2, 6 April 2000).

<sup>41</sup> R2, 6 April 2000

<sup>42</sup> R2, 6 April 2000

<sup>43</sup> The relationship between the South African Communist Party and mass organisations such as the ANC, COSATU and, in former years, the UDF is an obvious, if imperfect, analogy.

<sup>44</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1998).

<sup>45</sup> The standard distinction made in the literature is between tertiary and primary or secondary forms of prevention (Brantingham & Faust, 1976).

<sup>46</sup> Here too the crime prevention literature suggests a possible explanation in the form of perpetrator displacement (Barr & Pease, 1990, p. 279). This takes place where a certain type of crime - here the wide range of offences associated with gangsterism - is so lucrative

that new offenders rapidly fill the vacancies created by removal of existing perpetrators.

<sup>47</sup> R2, 6 April 2000.

<sup>48</sup> R2, 6 April 2000 and cf. Cohen (1996). The extent to which politics has been decriminalised since 1994 is arguable. Pagad would no doubt maintain that the State's (disingenuous) use of the Qibla connection to justify its attempts to suppress the organisation is tantamount to the criminalisation of politics.

<sup>49</sup> This paraphrases the text of a notice on the wall of the office where we met our reformed gangster respondents.

<sup>50</sup> Kenwyn is a mixed, predominantly middle class, suburb with a substantial Muslim population. Constantia, of course, needs no introduction.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Hadland (2000); *Cape Times* (2000, 14 September); and Leggett (2000).

<sup>52</sup> In the second of these cases two Pagad supporters were found guilty of murdering a six-year-old girl, Chrystal Abrahams, during a firefight between armed protestors and an alleged drug dealer and his bodyguards.