**RASTAFARI UNITED FRONT**



**EASTERN CAPE**

**PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

*SUBMISSIONS TO AMMENDMENT OF CANNABIS BILL 2020*

Amended on the 04/10/20 in Uitenhage:

Rastafari from various parts of the Sarah Baartman Region, Makhanda, Nelson Mandela Bay, Humansdorp, Uitenhage and Despatch, came together in a formal meeting to discuss the issue of the recently released Cannabis Bill. As the Rastafari community of the Eastern Cape we feel the Government did not consult enough with the communities that will be directly affected by the legal implications attached to the Bill.

The Bill in its nature is designed to restrict, limit and bind the Rastafari community and Cannabis users from enjoying our Constitutional rights of Privacy, personal use, possession and cultivation of the Cannabis plant. It does not offer the opportunity for the affected communities to make a living from the plant as it has an unlimited potential to contribute to the Economy of South Africa.

As the Eastern Cape Cannabis is intrinsically connected to our heritage as this Plant was used by AbaThwa and the AmaMpondo peoples for centuries before Colonisation. It was a Cash Crop used to trade with other Nations therefore our people were aware of the economic benefits of the Plant. It was used as a Medicine for healing certain ailments, this also proving our knowledge of the Plant before it was criminalised.

**Bill amendment by section**

1. **Definitions and interpretations-** The definitions and interpretations given on Cannabis Equivalent, Cannabis Plant Equivalent, commercial quantity, deal in, possess in private and prescribed quantity are defined and interpreted without the consideration of the Cannabis Users Rights and Freedoms allowed by the Constitution of South Africa. These definitions are limited and uncontemplated.
2. **Prescribed quantities for personal use by adults**- The prescribing of quantities for personal use by Government was an unfair, unjust and partial process which did not consider the freedoms of the communities that use the plant as crop for food consumption, as an herbal remedy, as a building block for building houses, as an industrial plant for a number of applications in industry. The prescribed quantities limit the amount we have to possess in public while cigarette smokers and alcohol users are free to possess unlimited amounts.
3. **Cultivation Offences**- It is clear that while drafting this section farming and agro processing of the plant was not considered because to us cultivating the plant is not as offence.
4. **Cannabis Offences-** Instead of providing relief to the over populated prisons and the influx of petty cases in the Court System, the Bill is set to increase the arrests of innocent cannabis

users, damage careers and records of working and contributing citizens of South Africa. It does not allow for free use and possession of the plant by the Rastafari Community therefore leading to unfair prosecutions and ruthless persecution by the State Police.

1. **Consumption Offences-** This is directly focusing on smoking which is only one of the many ways available to us of consuming the plant. It is limiting us to smoking while we steam, drink and eat the Cannabis plant, thus rendering this section as unfair and uncontemplated.
2. **Offences involving a child-** This section suggests that as parents or guardians who use Cannabis we are irresponsible if we are to use Cannabis in the sight of a child or to use Cannabis to heal or treat a child. It implies that we are ignorant of the wellbeing and safety of our children, it is branding us as irresponsible and care free parents. As Cannabis users and Parents we are aware of the numerable benefits to children that the plant has to offer therefore this Bill limits that right of parenting.
3. **Penalties-** The subscribed penalties do not offer any relief to the penal system instead it will cause a great influx due to unfair prosecutions. The penalties subscribed remain as tools of the criminal justice system to keep the Cannabis users behind bars. As Cannabis users we remain as criminals to the Justice System.

As the Eastern Cape Rastafari we call for the re-compensation of all past injustices waged onto the Rastafari by the State. We have been unfairly treated by the Criminal Justice System since the birth of this Democracy. The Deputy Chief Justice Zondo had offered an opportunity in 2018, for the State to reconcile with the Rastafari Community and the broader Cannabis users but instead the State (Department of Justice and Correctional Services) compiles a Bill that is unfair and unjust to us as the People of South Africa.

The Re-compensation could come in the form of Bursaries for the families who have lost ones and have faced brutality from the State in the name of Dagga.

To conclude our submissions we unapologetically refuse and reject this bill with the rejection it deserves. It is not progressive to our community as it will lead to the destruction of our communities. It will lead to unfair arrests, police brutality, house raids, search on site which will degrade the dignity of the Rastafari Community. We will continue the fight to free the Cannabis Plant and to liberate the Ratsaman in this Land. The land of our forefathers who used Cannabis as Cash Crop and as a Medicine to heal.