



Anti-Apartheid Movement

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*The Anti-Apartheid Movement
is in Consultative Status with
the Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC) of the United Nations*

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1

26th September 1985

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing concerning the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which is to take place next month in Nassau. I understand that the Commonwealth's policy towards Southern Africa will be the major item on the agenda, and that the discussion will focus in particular on the issue of sanctions.

I have recently returned from a visit to Australia and New Zealand where I was able to discuss these issues with your colleagues, Prime Minister Hawke and Prime Minister Lange. I have also been in contact with other Commonwealth leaders. They, as you know, are united in the conviction that the Commonwealth should collectively take a stand for economic sanctions. Clearly such a move by the Commonwealth would have the same authority that the Gleneagles Agreement on sporting relations with South Africa has had.

My many public meetings in Australia and New Zealand also brought home to me the extent of Britain's isolation within the Commonwealth. Your Government's opposition to any form of effective measures against the apartheid regime has been used to undermine action by the UN Security Council and the Council of Ministers of the European Community. I was reminded that in New Delhi you were a signatory to the Communiqué which stated that, "If South Africa continues to obstruct the implementation of Resolution 435 the adoption of appropriate measures under the Charter of the United Nations will have to be considered." But this commitment was put in question by your Government at the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa meeting of 9th July when your representative expressed reservations on this very point.

I am convinced that if the Government were to insist upon opposing economic sanctions at the Commonwealth Summit it would do irreparable harm to this unique community of nations and even put the very future of the Commonwealth at risk. It would also seriously damage our bilateral relations with many Commonwealth countries.

As I have /....

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As I have frequently stated the case for sanctions is overwhelming. The approach which you and your Ministers have adopted has clearly failed even in its limited objectives. Events within South Africa, South Africa's renewed aggression against its neighbours and its intransigence over Namibia, all underline the pressing need for effective international action.

I believe that the Government should give much more serious consideration to the arguments being advanced by its Commonwealth and European partners. In particular I would urge you and your Cabinet colleagues to give full consideration before Nassau both to the consequences for Southern Africa, and to the risk for the future of the Commonwealth, if the Government persists with its present policy of opposing effective sanctions.

Yours sincerely,

+ Trevor Huddleston CR
President