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THE PRIME MINISTER

10 November 1987

Dear Bishop Huddleston,

Thank you for your letter of 24 October about South Africa and Namibia.

As I said at Vancouver, apartheid is an utterly repulsive and detestable system which must go. We share this conviction with the rest of the world. We have also time and again made clear to the South African Government our opposition to repression and to abuses of human rights, in particular the detention and ill-treatment of children.

It is absurd to suggest that because the British Government oppose punitive sanctions we "stand by" apartheid. Nor have we 'reneged' on the undertakings we gave at Nassau. As I told the House of Commons in my statement on the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on 22 October, we disagree with those who say that sanctions are the most effective means to bring about change and to get rid of apartheid. Punitive sanctions would only harden attitudes and cause hardship above all to black people in South Africa. Economic stagnation or decline would not make it easier for South Africans to work out answers to their problems, but would delay and complicate the process still further.

I firmly believe that our policies are the ones best calculated to contribute to the promotion of peaceful but fundamental change in South Africa:-

- we shall continue to press for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and the unbanning of the ANC and other political parties, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. In this context, I very much welcome the release of Mr. Mbeki;
- we shall continue to carry out scrupulously the limited measures against South Africa which we have previously agreed as a signal of our serious desire for progress. These measures, including the United Nations Arms Embargo, have been fully implemented and are properly enforced. We are not undermining the measures adopted by other friendly countries;
- we shall continue to give practical assistance to black South Africans;
- we shall continue our substantial programmes of economic and security assistance to South Africa's neighbours;
- we shall build on the fact that change in South Africa is continuing - even if too slowly - and that South Africans are showing themselves more receptive to new ideas;
- we shall use our influence to encourage the South African Government to continue the process of legislative reform;
- as I made clear at Vancouver, we shall continue to give our support to the negotiating concept first put forward by the Eminent Persons Group, which we regard as the most effective way to promote the dialogue

which is needed for fundamental change by peaceful means.

I cannot agree that my comments in Vancouver about the ANC undermine the prospects of securing change in South Africa with the minimum of violence. We have made absolutely clear that we condemn all acts of violence in South Africa, from whatever quarter. In keeping with this, we have sought to persuade the ANC to abandon the armed struggle, believing that violence only delays the process of change which we all seek. However, as you know, the ANC proclaim the legitimacy of armed struggle and at Vancouver the Head of the International Section of the ANC, Mr. Johnstone Makatini, was reported to have said that the violence could include attacks on British and other Western companies refusing to disengage and hasten the collapse of the apartheid system. We take strong exception to such irresponsible and inflammatory language.

We remain firmly committed to independence for Namibia on the basis of UNSCR 435. We are in agreement on this with the Commonwealth and the rest of the international community. In Vancouver, we supported the Commonwealth statement on Namibia. Since then, on 30 October we voted for UN Security Council Resolution 601, which authorises the Secretary General to explore the prospects for arranging a ceasefire between South Africa and SWAPO. We welcomed the resolution, as we do any measure designed to give new impetus to efforts to implement UNSCR 435. But we do not consider that measures under Chapter VII would be effective in securing the goal of Namibian independence.

*Yours sincerely
Trevor Huddleston*

The Most Reverend Trevor Huddleston, CR.