

RECEIVED 7 JUL 1989



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

4 July 1989

From the Private Secretary

Dear Bishop Huddleston.

Thank you for your letter of 16 June to the Prime Minister about use of the death penalty in South Africa and the case of the "Uppington 14". I have been asked to reply.

The Government share your concern about the severity of the sentences imposed on the Uppington 14. Our Embassy at Cape Town have kept in touch with the defence lawyers. As you may know, the 14 were refused leave to appeal against their sentences on 27 June. We understand that they will now petition the Chief Justice against this decision. With legal avenues yet to be exhausted, it would be premature at present for the Government to intervene. We shall follow the progress of the petition and any subsequent appeal proceedings closely.

You will already know the Government's criteria for intervention in all such cases. We are prepared to consider intervening exceptionally, only when all legal avenues have been exhausted. The case must be clearly political and there must be strong extenuating circumstances or grounds to doubt the fairness of the judicial process. Any appeals are made on purely humanitarian grounds.

The Prime Minister does not believe that we should abandon this policy in favour of a general appeal on behalf of those sentenced for allegedly political offences. Nevertheless, the Government is concerned at the number and range of offences subject to the death penalty in South Africa and raised this with Mr. de Klerk when he was here on 23 June. As you specifically asked about action by the European Community, you may like to know that the Spanish Ambassador in Cape Town, acting on behalf of the Twelve, expressed this concern to the South African Government on 20 April and 24 May.

Yours sincerely,

 CHARLES POWELL

The Most Reverend Trevor Huddleston