

SOUTHERN AFRICA:

'THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW'

AN APPEAL TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE



by

**HIS EXCELLENCY
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I venture to address a special appeal to the government and people of the United Kingdom at a critical time in Southern Africa. You have a responsibility, indeed an obligation, to act, and an opportunity to make a unique contribution for peace, freedom, human rights and friendship among nations.

We are faced today not only with intolerable oppression of the black majority in South Africa, but with constant breaches of the peace and the threat of a widening conflict.

The Pretoria regime has continued, in persistent defiance of unanimous resolutions of the United Nations, with its vain effort to suppress the legitimate demands of the majority of the population by resort to repression, violence and terror. It has maintained its illegal occupation of Namibia, a sacred trust of the international community, by a war against its inhabitants. It has constantly resorted to acts of aggression, assassination and subversion against the neighbouring independent African states. It seeks to blackmail the people of South Africa and of Southern Africa as a whole, through the use of its military and economic power, into accepting a perpetual status of subservience and inferiority. Its attempts to acquire and employ nuclear capability represent an enormous danger to peace.

The proclamation of the International Year of Mobilisation for Sanctions against South Africa reflects the deep concern of the overwhelming majority of states, and numerous public organisations, at this grave crisis resulting from the policies and actions of the apartheid regime of South Africa. It also underlines their determination to concert international action in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The gravity of this crisis demands urgent and decisive measures. Mere condemnation of the evil of apartheid, and mere gestures of opposition to it, are no longer adequate.

The overwhelming majority of states, including western states, have recognised that comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa are the only effective and peaceful means to resolve the situation.

The major western powers, which have resisted such counter-measures and enabled the Pretoria regime to continue with its disastrous policies, can make a great contribution if only they are willing to harmonise their policies with those of the great majority of states of the world.

The South African regime has caused an escalating crisis by refusing to heed the timely warning of a British Prime Minister about the 'Winds of Change' blowing through Africa. But some western powers have also failed to adjust their policies to the winds of change, and have thus enabled the crisis to grow.

They must make a choice between friendship with the Pretoria regime and friendship with Africa and all countries committed to the eradication of apartheid; between support for a doomed and dying system, and the inevitable triumph of liberation; and between the bitter legacy of the past and the promise of the future.

Africa and the United Nations seek to assist the people of South Africa to eliminate apartheid and build a non-racial democratic society in which all the people, irrespective of race or colour, enjoy equal rights. They call for the support of all governments and all peoples, despite their differences on any other matters, to join in this effort. Southern Africa must not become the scene of any cold war confrontations of external powers.

A policy of inaction or collaboration with the Pretoria regime only serves to encourage it in its suicidal course at the cost of enormous human suffering, and to precipitate a conflagration.

The government and people of the United Kingdom have a vital interest to pursue the cause of peace and freedom in Africa, and thereby develop close and productive relations with the African nations.

It is a painful fact of history that much of the agony and suffering of the black people of Southern Africa results from the British decision to transfer power in South Africa to a white minority, ignoring the anguish and the appeals of the African people for their rights. Indeed, the situation has been aggravated by Britain's involvement in South Africa, especially through trade and investment, which has helped to sustain the white minority regime and its racist policies.

At the same time, we have valued the concern of public opinion in Britain over racism and repression in South Africa, a concern shared by religious leaders, trade unions and many other organisations. We have commended the untiring work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and other groups committed to African freedom. We have welcomed the steps taken by successive governments to show their abhorrence of apartheid.

What is needed now is for the government and people of the United Kingdom to use all their influence and capacity to help in the speedy liberation of South Africa and Namibia.

I appeal to you, therefore, to terminate all relations with the racist regime in Pretoria; to assist the legitimate struggle of the people of South Africa and Namibia; and use all influence in the United Nations and in other international organisations to help concert international action.

I make this appeal to you because of my faith in the British people and their best traditions.

I recall that the United Kingdom helped bring about the independence of Zimbabwe, though after a long conflict and much suffering. There is no time to wait in the case of South Africa and Namibia, for the danger is of an unimaginable loss of life and a fateful and ever-widening conflict.

The time to act is now.

Further copies of this Appeal are available from:
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