

NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 8, 1984

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CONGRESSMEN URGE RELEASE OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN LEADERS

Washington, D.C. -- Led by Congressman Geo. W. Crockett, Jr, a bipartisan group of Members of Congress today called upon the government of South Africa to release Nelson and Winnie Mandela, black South African leaders who have been held in detention for more than 20 years for their opposition to racial apartheid.

The Congressmen, Representatives Geo. W. Crockett, Jr. (D-Michigan), Claude Pepper (D-Fla.), Hamilton Fish, Jr. (R-N.Y.) and Jim Leach (R-Iowa), introduced House Resolution 430 on February 7, 1984. The Resolution calls for the immediate release of Nelson Mandela from prison and of his wife, Winnie Mandela, from house detention in South Africa. H. Res. 430 also requests that President Reagan work for their release.

Nelson Mandela, a leader of the African National Congress, was convicted in 1964 and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole for engaging in activities to overthrow the white minority government of South Africa. Except for a brief 11-month period, his wife Winnie has been under house arrest since 1962 for her role in founding the Black Parents Association in South Africa.

The resolution points out that the Mandelas have been leaders of the struggle by black South Africans to end the apartheid system which is based on "violence, exploitation and deprivation of basic human and civil rights" and is already "condemned by the governments of the United States, the United Nations and virtually every country in the world."

According to Representative Crockett, who has sought the Mandelas' release since 1982, "This resolution allows Members of Congress to make known their abhorrence of the apartheid system, and their commitment to the eradication of the brutal and inhuman conditions under which blacks exist in South Africa. I am confident that enough Members will join as co-sponsors of this resolution to ensure its favorable consideration by the Congress this year."

Congressman Crockett continued, "The South African government must begin to engage all segments of the South African population in a search for just and rapid change if violence is to be avoided. The release of Nelson and Winnie Mandela is a necessary step for the process of accommodation and reconciliation to begin."

Congressmen Crockett and Leach are both members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House. Congressman Fish is the ranking minority member of the Judiciary Committee, and Congressman Pepper is Chairman of the House Rules Committee.