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# AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

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MAR 17 1967

c/o UAW

1126 Sixteenth Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20036

March 16, 1967

Representative Charles Diggs, Jr.  
House of Representatives  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Diggs:

Knowing your great concern for the situation in South Africa and for the elimination of racial discrimination, I thought the enclosed material might be of some interest to you. As you know, the 21st of March is the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. It has also been proclaimed by the United Nations as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. A general memo on this event is enclosed along with material from the United Nations General Assembly and from the Special Committee on Apartheid.

I hope that you might be able to comment on the significance of this day before the House on Tuesday. If you would like any additional material or if I can be of any further assistance, I can be reached at 296-7484 ext. 78.

We have greatly appreciated your support for the American Committee on Africa in the past. Your recent efforts to halt U.S. aircraft carriers from entering South African ports were quite successful. Congratulations.

Best wishes with your many activities.

Sincerely yours,

Sue Orrin

Washington Representative

UNITED NATIONS

MARCH 21 - INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
in commemoration of the Sharpeville Massacre

On October 26, 1966 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2142 which proclaimed March 21 International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid reports that March 21 was selected as it commemorated the anniversary of the massacre of peaceful demonstrators who were protesting racial discrimination in Sharpeville, South Africa, seven years ago.

EVENTS IN SHARPEVILLE, MARCH 21, 1960:

On that day, tens of thousands of Africans held peaceful demonstrations all over South Africa against the humiliating pass laws which restrict their freedom of movement and employment. This non-violent campaign was organized by Mr. Robert Sobukwe, President of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). He encouraged men to leave their passes at home and then offer themselves for arrest to their local police stations.

The Sharpeville demonstration was one of a series of protests against apartheid (racial segregation). Demonstrations, work stoppages, and the burning of passes took place all over the country. The work boycott on March 28 was reported 90% effective. 30,000 Africans marched into Cape Town on March 30 in a peaceful and disciplined demonstration.

These manifestations were met with indiscriminate violence and brutality by the police. Scores of lives were lost. Langa and Nyanga, African locations near Cape Town, were surrounded by the police who prevented food from entering so that workers would be forced back to work by hunger. Later, the police went into locations and assaulted people who had remained at home. In Sharpeville, an African location near Vereeniging, police fired at a peaceful rally of Africans killing 69 persons and wounding nearly 200 others.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

These repressive measures shocked world opinion and brought home the urgent need for international action to eliminate the cause of the tragedy, namely, the oppression and humiliation of millions of people by a Government which practised racial discrimination as a state policy. Many Governments, organizations, church groups and individuals condemned this racism, organized boycott campaigns, and/or collected funds for the relief of the victims.

The Sharpeville incident was a turning point in the United Nations consideration of the question of apartheid. The Security Council on April 1, 1960 adopted resolution S/4300 which expressed the grave concern of Governments and peoples for the events in South Africa, recognized the possibility that continuation of apartheid policies might "endanger international peace and security", deplored the policies and actions of the South African Government, and urged that Government to abandon its policies of apartheid.

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For further information, contact: Sue Orrin, Washington Representative, American Committee on Africa, Room 315, 1126 Sixteenth Street, NW, D.C., 296-7484 ext. 73.

### U.S. REACTIONS:

For the first time the United States Government responded to the situation in South Africa. Mr. Lincoln White, U.S. State Department press officer, said, "While the United States, as a matter of practice does not ordinarily comment on the internal affairs of governments with which it enjoys normal relations, it cannot help but regret the tragic loss of life resulting from the measures taken against demonstrators in South Africa." (New York Times, 3/23/60). The United States joined the other nations protesting the South African Government's actions in the Security Council resolution.

Fear that Sharpeville would trigger the long-anticipated bloody revolution and fear that boycotts by smaller nations might snowball, led investors in South Africa to withdraw their funds. South African gold and foreign exchange holdings dropped below the \$280 million danger point to \$216 million. THE UNITED STATES CAME TO THE RESCUE. The U.S. contributed in 1961 almost the entire amount of foreign exchange needed to reverse the decline of the South African economy. In '61 American companies increased their investments by \$23 million; an improved trade balance with the U.S. furnished another \$50 million; and \$150 million in loans were made by U.S.-owned, or U.S.-influenced institutions (I.M.F., World Bank and affiliates, Chase Manhattan Bank, First National City Bank of New York, other U.S. lenders).

### CURRENT SITUATION:

The U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid reports that the "South African Government proceeded (after Sharpeville) with more arbitrary laws, mass arrests, stronger repression and an intensive build-up of its military and police forces." (see also, American Committee on Africa, Southern Africa: the facts, October, 1966).

The United States Government still officially condemns the policies of apartheid. However, U.S. companies still invest \$500 million annually, directly in South Africa and indirectly another \$300 million.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF SHARPEVILLE:

1. "The Sharpeville massacre must be regarded as a grim reminder, not only of the profound injustice of apartheid, but also of the fact that people who live under the system of apartheid have no prospect of liberating themselves from oppression, unless international opinion can be marshalled on their side and international action, can be taken to liberate them." (Special Committee on Apartheid)
2. Sharpeville is a reminder of the need for the elimination of racial discrimination if international peace is to be possible. Rhodesia currently illustrates how racist attitudes are an "international threat to the peace". (see American Committee on Africa, Rhodesia: fact sheet, February, 1967)
3. To the United States, Sharpeville is a reminder of the dichotomy between our governmental policy toward South Africa and the ramifications of our economic relations with South Africa.

ACTION URGED:

by the United Nations General Assembly:

Calls upon all states to sign and ratify or to accede to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. (NOTE: Ambassador Goldberg has signed this, but it has not even been presented to the Senate for ratification. The U.S. Senate has not ratified any of the Human Rights Conventions.)

by the U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid:

1. Declare support to U.N. efforts to promote the elimination of apartheid and facilitate the building of a non-racial society;
  2. Publicize the evils of apartheid and the efforts of the U.N. to combat apartheid;
  3. Consider means to inform the people of South Africa, through the press and by radio broadcasts, of international concern over the situation;
  4. Demand the release of the thousands of opponents of apartheid who have been imprisoned and restricted under arbitrary laws, and are being subjected to ill-treatment in prisons; and
  5. Contribute to the U.N. Trust Fund for South Africa (the U.S. Government has not contributed to this fund) and the U.N. Educational and Training Program for South Africans....
- (for further details see attached report pp. 8-9)

by the American Committee on Africa:

1. Economic disengagement — end sugar quota for South Africa, proscribe Ex-Im Bank loans and FCIA credit to South Africa, apply the Export Control Act to heavy machinery and transport equipment, extend Fair Employment Practices to U.S. companies abroad, devise legislation to tax imports from South Africa, work for an Executive Order to declare that U.S. investment in South Africa is contrary to the best interests of U.S. policy.
2. Request integration of U.S. diplomatic personnel in South Africa (of 56 U.S. diplomatic personnel in South Africa, all are white — no Negro has ever been suggested by the State Department to take a post there.)
3. Remove tracking stations to Botswana and off-shore.
4. Forbid U.S. aircraft carriers and other ships from docking in South Africa and thus forcing U.S. soldiers to submit to apartheid.
5. Increase aid to refugees from southern Africa through national and U.N. programs (including the U.N. Trust Fund, education projects in Zambia and Tanzania, right of asylum for black South Africans in the U.S.)
6. South-West Africa: Assist U.N. Administering Authority to enter South-West Africa to prepare the people for independence.
7. Rhodesia: Continue to support mandatory selective sanctions as adopted by the U.N.. Support implementation of these sanctions against those nations supplying oil to Rhodesia. (Currently, U.S. oil companies are assisting South Africa to obtain oil. South Africans are allowing this oil into Rhodesia.)

"The Sharpeville incident was a turning point in the United Nations consideration of the question of apartheid. It led to the adoption by the Security Council on 1 April 1960 of resolution S/4300. This resolution took into account 'the strong feelings and grave concern aroused among Governments and peoples of the world by the happenings in the Union of South Africa', and recognized that the situation in that country was one that had led to international friction, and if continued might endanger international peace and security. It deplored the policies and actions of the South African Government and called upon that Government to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality, and to abandon its policies of apartheid and racial discrimination.

"There was hope at the time that world concern and the mounting tension in South Africa itself would lead to a re-assessment of policy and a change in the situation. Unfortunately, this hope was not fulfilled. The South African Government proceeded with more arbitrary laws, mass arrests, stronger repression and an intensive build-up of its military and police forces. The Sharpeville massacre must be regarded as a grim reminder, not only of the profound injustice of apartheid, but also of the fact that people who live under the system of apartheid have no prospect of liberating themselves from oppression, unless international opinion can be marshalled on their side and international action, can be taken to liberate them.

"The Special Committee hopes, therefore, that the commemoration of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will result in more effective action, at Governmental and non-Governmental level, to help terminate the dangerous situation in Southern Africa. The Committee suggests the following as among the activities which might be undertaken by Governments and non-Governmental organizations:

- (a) Declare support to United Nations efforts to promote the elimination of apartheid and facilitate the building of a non-racial society in which all inhabitants of South Africa, irrespective of race, would enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.
- (b) Publicize the evils of apartheid and the efforts of the United Nations to combat apartheid.

(more)

- (c) Consider means to inform the people of South Africa, through the press and by radio broadcasts, of international concern over the situation, and so combat the misrepresentation of international opinion on apartheid by the South African Government.
- (d) Demand the release of the thousands of opponents of apartheid who have been imprisoned and restricted under arbitrary laws, and are being subjected to ill-treatment in prisons.
- (e) Contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa and the United Nations Education and Training Programme for South Africans, and to various non-governmental funds such as the International Defence and Aid Fund, the Southern African Education Fund and others which are designed to provide assistance and relief to the victims of apartheid.
- (f) Contribute to organizations which are combating apartheid such as the anti-apartheid movements in many countries and the South African political organizations in exile.

"The Special Committee on Apartheid trusts that this appeal will meet with a positive response and would welcome information on the steps which are taken by States and organizations to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is to be hoped that the proclamation of this day will bring about an increased awareness by the peoples of the world of their responsibility in eliminating the scourge of racial discrimination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination."



UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
LIMITED

A/RES/2142 (XXI)  
28 October 1966

Twenty-first session  
Agenda item 57

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

/on the report of the Third Committee (A/6484)/

2142 (XXI). Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 1905 (XVIII) of 20 November 1963 and 2017 (XX) of 1 November 1965 on measures to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,

Recalling also its resolution 2106 A (XX) of 21 December 1965, in which it adopted and opened for signature the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,

Noting the information in the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>1/</sup> furnished in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 10/6 (XXXIX) of 28 July 1965 and General Assembly resolution 2017 (XX) on the action taken by Member States, the United Nations, the specialized agencies and regional inter-governmental organizations directed towards the implementation of the Declaration,

Noting also that a seminar on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination is to be held, under the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights, in 1968,

Noting further that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities is undertaking a special study of racial discrimination in the political, economic, social and cultural fields, and has already appointed a Special Rapporteur for that purpose,

<sup>1/</sup> E/4174 and Add.1-2, Add.2/Corr.1 and Add.3-9.

Reaffirming that racial discrimination and apartheid are denials of human rights and fundamental freedoms and of justice and are offences against human dignity,

Recognizing that racial discrimination and apartheid, wherever they are practised, constitute a serious impediment to economic and social development and are obstacles to international co-operation and peace,

Deeply concerned that racial discrimination and apartheid, despite the decisive condemnation of them by the United Nations, continue to exist in some countries and territories,

Convinced of the urgent necessity of further measures to attain the goal of complete elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and apartheid,

1. Condemns, wherever they exist, all policies and practices of apartheid, racial discrimination and segregation, including the practices of discrimination inherent in colonialism;
2. Reiterates that such policies and practices on the part of any Member State are incompatible with the obligations assumed by it under the Charter of the United Nations;
3. Calls again upon all States in which racial discrimination or apartheid is practised to comply speedily and faithfully with the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and with the above-mentioned resolutions and all other pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly, and to take all necessary steps, including legislative measures, for this purpose;
4. Calls upon all eligible States without delay to sign and ratify or to accede to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
5. Calls upon Member States which have not already done so to initiate appropriate programmes of action to eliminate racial discrimination and apartheid, including in particular the promotion of equal opportunities for educational and vocational training, and guarantees for the enjoyment, without distinction on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin, of basic human rights such as the rights to vote, to equality in the administration of justice, to equal economic opportunities and to equal access to social services;

6. Appeals to Member States that, in combating discriminatory practices, education and culture should be directed, and mass media and literary creation should be encouraged, towards removing the prejudices and erroneous beliefs, such as the belief in the superiority of one race over another, which incite such practices;

7. Requests the Member States which have not yet replied to the Secretary-General's inquiry as to the measures they have taken to implement the Declaration to do so without delay;

8. Proclaims 21 March as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;

9. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-second session a report on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and on the implementation of the provisions of the present resolution;

10. Decides to place this item on the provisional agenda of its twenty-second session.

1452nd plenary meeting,  
26 October 1966.