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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

Diggs 123 F18 - 05

January 31, 1975
RELEASE UPON RECEIPT

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DIGGS STATEMENT AT JAN SMUTS AIRPORT, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Congressman Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D-Mich), Chairman of the African Subcommittee in the U.S. House of Representatives, made the following statement upon his arrival at the Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa, on January 30, 1975:

"Since the South African authorities have prohibited my holding a press conference or even meeting with the press during my overnight transit stop at Jan Smuts Airport, I have asked the U.S. Embassy here to distribute this statement to the media.

"In fact, not only has the South African regime refused to give me a visa during my current study mission to Africa, but it also has denied me even the basic courtesies customarily afforded visitors transiting through that country. For the fourth time in six attempts, I have been refused a visa for travel in South Africa. (And, on one other occasion, I was notified that the valid visa I was authorized in 1971 would be dishonored, notwithstanding the visa agreement between the United States and South Africa.)

"In addition, however, to being refused a visa, I have also been informed that I am persona non grata to the South African government, that I will not be allowed to enter South Africa even to use the facilities of the Holiday Inn just outside the Johannesburg Airport, that I will be allowed no South African visitors, and that I will be permitted to meet only with U.S. Embassy officials who have received passes from the South African government to enter the transit area of the Johannesburg Airport. These unreasonable and unwarranted restrictions are not placed on any South African officials who visit the United States.

"I have been informed that the reason for this discriminatory action and for my being regarded persona non grata to the South African government included references that the press conference I held in 1973 at the Holiday Inn near Jan Smuts Airport was unauthorized and that I cancelled appointments with South African government Ministers during my sole visit to the country.

"I can only conclude that the South African government fears my presence may have an encouraging impact on the Black majority in South Africa — who have displayed in recent months, following the Portuguese coup and the resulting announced June independence of neighboring Mozambique, a stronger than ever determination to achieve their own liberation. The same apprehension would apply to the South African government's excluding me from Namibia, now bordering a soon-to-be-liberated Angola which I just visited. I would like to note that I have not been the only one who has been subjected to South Africa's discriminatory practices. U.S.I.S. official Richard Saunders and his wife, for example, were refused service at a Durban hotel in 1974 because they were Black. Blacks from the U.S. have, as a general rule, not been permitted to visit South Africa. Black Americans who are allowed into South Africa are assigned temporary classifications such as "honorary white" during the period of their visit.

"We have seen in the past few years the orchestrated, stepped-up campaign of the South African government to convince the American public and, in particular, our political leaders and government officials at the national, state, and local levels that South Africa is, in fact, changing. It should be clear, however, that South Africa is the only country in the world where economic, social and political discrimination on account of race is the proclaimed policy of the government, instituted and implemented by law.

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"A few basic facts about the situation there are illustrative.

Africans constitute 70% of the population, but are effectively restricted to the 12% of the land which is the least productive and the poorest. Whites, who form 18% of the population, control 69% of the national purchasing power. The ratio of European to African per capita income reached 19.2 to 1 in 1972, while in 1970 it was 17.5 to 1. Thus the difference in the income of the two populations is growing instead of narrowing, and may even amount to a 20 to 1 ratio soon. It is no wonder that the Bantustan leaders, recognizing that the government's separate development policy effectively keeps the majority population from participating in the country's wealth, have rejected so-called "independence" for the homelands. In addition to being economically exploited, Africans are totally excluded from any participation in the governing political system. The South African Parliament is all white. And, not one Member of Parliament represents the African majority. The Bantu Legislative Councils and other urban advisory councils are in effect advisory only, and are accountable to the all-white Parliament, not to the Black majority whose views they presume to represent. The continuing and growing spate of strikes by Black workers in South Africa is evidence that the majority is increasingly loathe to accept continued repression by the minority government.

"South African propaganda that viable changes are being made because a few petty apartheid practices are diminishing is misleading and incorrect. It is clear that the integration of a few public parks, restaurants, and libraries does nothing to move the majority population one step closer to participation in the political system where it counts.

"In fact, lest there be any confusion on this point, the South African Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster, has clarified his government's position. The November 16, 1974 Johannesburg Star (International Weekly Edition) states:

'The Prime Minister, Mr. Vorster, told the leaders of Black Africa in a major speech in Zeerust this afternoon that one-man-one-vote in South Africa's parliament for whites and blacks would never come about. And he issued a serious warning to political commentators not to create expectations among people that they knew would not be realized and which could lead to outbursts and hostility among South Africa's peoples.'

"If any internal change at all has come about, it has been in the direction of increased repression and denial of basic freedoms by the government. This has been illustrated by the arrests last September and October of many leaders and members of Black organizations, including SASO (The South African Students Organization) and BPC (Black Peoples Convention). These detentions occurred following the peaceful gathering of many individuals to take part in a rally which was originally scheduled to display support for the liberation of Mozambique and for FRELIMO, the major liberation movement there. Attacks on the gathering by the police and dogs, security police raids, and the incommunicado detention of scores of Black people followed this gathering. The South African government has also moved in the past few months to increase restrictions on freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

"Now that a timetable for the independence of the Portuguese "Territories" has been set, the only remaining minority-controlled areas of southern Africa to be liberated are Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. I am confident that Zimbabwe will be liberated during 1975, if not by negotiated settlement with the majority, then by force. When that happens, I fully anticipate that an internationally-isolated South Africa and its so-called protectorate of Namibia will not be far behind.

"In the light of this continued repressiveness of the South African regime, U.S. representations and actions to bring about viable change are crucial. This is particularly important as followup to our statements before the Security Council in the debate on South Africa's expulsion from the United Nations. In particular, our Ambassador stated:

'We urge that South Africa simultaneously begin to bring an end to its apartheid policies and establish the basis for a just society

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and government where all are equal. We believe that after a quarter of a century of warnings, it is time for the South African government to adopt the measures that will lead to a society of equal opportunity, equal rewards, and equal justice for all....'

"I call upon our government to take action urgently and on a priority basis to assure that South Africa seriously begins to institute viable changes leading to the participation of the majority in the political system of the country but not in sham "Bantustan Government" -- i.e. majority rule. Further, I will call upon my government to assure:

1. that South Africa's practices in the issuing of visas be reciprocated; and
2. that Ambassador Hurd not be replaced when his assignment ends, as a clear signal to the South African government that we abhor its racist policies, thereby reducing the level of our diplomatic representation in South Africa."