



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

IN REPLY REFER TO:

August 10, 1964

Dear Congressman Diggs:

Thank you for your recent letter asking for comments on an article reporting that the American Committee on Africa had urged the United States to contribute official funds to aid victims of South African race legislation.

Mr. Peter Weiss, President of the American Committee on Africa, did write to the Secretary of State in the sense reported in the newspaper story. I am enclosing a copy of the Department's reply.

If the Department can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Douglas MacArthur II
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Copy of letter to
Mr. Peter Weiss.

The Honorable
Charles C. Diggs, Jr.
House of Representatives.

C
O
P
Y

August 19, 1965

Dear Mr. Weiss:

Thank you for your letter of June 17, 1965 to the Secretary of State urging that, in response to General Assembly resolution 1978 B (XVIII), the United States Government contribute assistance, through international agencies, to the families of persons persecuted by the South African Government for their opposition to the policies of apartheid.

The United States Government shares your concern for such families. The United States supported the General Assembly resolution you cite, which requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to seek ways of providing relief and assistance to such families, through the appropriate international agencies, and invited member states and organizations to contribute to such assistance.

There are, however, substantial problems in carrying out the resolution, which the Secretary-General's report of January 22, 1965 to the General Assembly on the implementation of the resolution makes clear.

With respect to those families outside South Africa, who thus might be considered refugees, the Secretary-General turned to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In a reply dated February 7, 1964 the High Commissioner stated that, in accordance with the terms of his mandate, and when requested by host governments, he was ready to provide assistance to refugees

Mr. Peter Weiss,
President,
American Committee on Africa,
211 East 43rd Street,
New York, New York.

from South Africa. He had, however, received no request for assistance from a government but was in contact with interested governments and followed developments to determine the possibilities of useful cooperation with them.

Should the situation change to permit the High Commissioner to act under his terms of reference, he would be expected to do so, utilizing his substantial resources, including his program of material assistance, to which the United States Government contributed on a voluntary basis approximately 24 per cent (\$700,000) in 1964. Of that contribution \$600,000 was earmarked to meet refugee needs in Africa. In addition, the United States contributes large amounts of food for the High Commissioner's activities through the PL-480 program.

Concerning the more difficult problem of detainees' families within South Africa, the Secretary-General wrote to the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. On June 4, 1964 the President replied that he understood the South African Red Cross Society was prepared in principle to assist families of detainees in case of need but that it would act alone and in close contact with the competent authorities. It appeared, the ICRC President concluded, that the South African Government considered that assistance to such families came within the domestic jurisdiction of the State, which could not agree to "any outside interference" in this regard.

So far as the United States position is concerned, this Government is prepared to consider sympathetically requests for assistance from foreign governments but does not, as a matter of policy, offer aid in the absence of such requests. The Government considers it entirely appropriate, however, for private organizations and groups in the United States to contribute to international voluntary relief organizations which can help in the circumstances.

I should like to assure you that the Department of State will continue to keep this problem under review to take any feasible steps to alleviate it.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Joseph J. Sisco
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for International Organization
Affairs