

IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 373

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE GEO. W. CROCKETT, JR.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
JUNE 24, 1986

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for this opportunity to bring before the Subcommittee on Africa this request that the United States seek to persuade South Africa to take positive steps to show its willingness to begin meaningful political negotiations with its Black majority.

There are two basic efforts that must be made by South Africa if it is to avert a civil war. One, it must move quickly to end the race and color discrimination known as apartheid, and, two, it must create a government representative of its diverse population of 890,000 Indians; 2.8 million Coloureds; 4.5 million whites and 24 million blacks. The stringent anti-apartheid act passed by the House last week seeks to address the first of these concerns; our proposal here today addresses the second.

On February 5th, I and 21 co-sponsors introduced House Resolution 373, which expresses the sense of the Congress that the President of the United States urge the Pretoria Government to free the jailed Nelson Mandela and to recognize the banned African National Congress

as a legitimate representative of the Black South African community.

Since then, we have been joined by another 74 co-sponsors, making a total of 95 of our colleagues who also believe that these are crucial steps that must be taken to avoid further violence and bloodshed in South Africa.

Mr. Chairman, the release of Mandela is mandatory for any peace initiative and his organization, the African National Congress, must be represented at any talks on the future of South Africa.

Almost everybody agrees on this except South African President Botha, and perhaps, Mr. Reagan, who has yet to speak out publicly on this issue.

No one wants to predict catastrophe for South Africa. But the nationwide state of emergency proclaimed last week by the Botha Government and the recent South African raids into Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe provide growing evidence that unless change in South Africa is fundamental, far reaching and even revolutionary in its proportions, the risks of disaster will continue to increase dangerously.

It is also equally clear that 24 million Black South Africans will not be denied their freedom much longer and that they will win the rights of citizenship by peaceful, or by other means.

The importance of Nelson Mandela's Freedom cannot be denied.

A resolution calling for the release from detention of Nelson and Winnie Mandela was passed overwhelmingly by the 98th Congress and sent by the President to the South African Government. Eventually, the banning orders on Winnie Mandela were lifted, but Nelson Mandela has been effectively entombed by his government for 24 years, his lips sealed and his pen crushed by laws which threatened with imprisonment anyone who repeated his words in public or published his writings.

Yet this great man, imprisoned for 24 years for an offense that carries a maximum of five years in our country, is regarded today by non-whites in South Africa and by the international community as one of the most respected symbols of resistance against-apartheid.

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Mandela's name is synonymous with that of the African National Congress, South Africa's oldest and best known organization of resistance against apartheid. While the majority of ANC's membership is Black, the organization is multi-racial and includes Indians, Coloureds and whites within its membership ranks. The ANC was created in 1912 with the objective of seeking change in South Africa's segregated system through non-violent means.

Throughout most of its history, the Congress sought to achieve this goal through negotiations with the white minority government. Its efforts suffered repeated setbacks.

South Africa's first Constitution raised the color bar; legislation in 1913 and 1916 limited the Blacks' ownership of property and defined where they could live; strikes for better living conditions and wages were brutally suppressed, and in 1948, the election of the National Party made apartheid official government policy. The action led the ANC to become more militant but it still basically remained a non-violent organization.

However, its peaceful protests, boycotts and demonstrations against apartheid were met with mass arrests and detentions, repressive police action and oppressive laws to control dissent. Despite this, the ANC continued to urge peaceful resistance to the government's system of segregation.

And in 1955, members of the ANC, working with Indian, Coloured and white organizations adopted the Freedom Charter which declared that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it...The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, color or sex."

The South African Government finally moved directly against the organization in March 1960, when the Congress announced its plans to stage a nationwide protest against the repressive pass laws. An incident occurred at Sharpeville and the police lost control, shooting to death 69 Blacks. When the ANC called for a day of mourning on March 28, 1960, the Government introduced legislation to ban the Congress and the PAC, and declared a state of emergency.

The ANC went underground where it has continued its fight against apartheid during the past 26 years.

Today, the Congress enjoys wide support in Black townships across South Africa. It is commonplace for thousands of Blacks at rallies and at funerals to unfurl the black, green and gold ANC flag, sing ANC freedom songs and even distribute ANC leaflets--all in open defiance of the government. It is as if the people in ghettos like Alexandria and Soweto have "unbanned" the organization.

Mr. Chairman, it is generally agreed that there can be no genuine settlement of the South African crisis without the direct involvement of the ANC. During the past year, more than 13 private groups of South African businessmen, religious leaders, including clergy from the Dutch Reformed Church, politicians, university students and trade unionists have travelled to Black-ruled African countries to establish a dialogue with ANC officials.

Gavin Relly, the chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, the country's largest corporation, organized and led a group of business executives last September to Lusaka, Zambia to meet with ANC leaders.

In an recent article in the magazine, Foreign Policy, Rely

said:

"Undoubtedly, the banned African National Congress (ANC), the political group supported by the largest number of South African blacks, is an important political actor. Consequently, for practical as well as philosophical reasons, South African business advocates the release of the ANC's leadership and the "unbanning of the organization--and indeed supports the same for all other detainees of conscience and banned organizations. Only when these individuals and groups are enabled to play their role in South Africa's political development will they become constructive forces able to move away from the politics of violence."

This view was echoed in the recent report of the seven Commonwealth leaders, known as the Eminent Persons Group. Their message was specific. Legalize the African National Congress in

return for a ceasefire, and free Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners so that talks can begin on a meaningful political settlement.

Alex Boraine, who recently resigned after 12 years as an opposition party member of the South African Parliament wrote in a letter carried in the June 5th edition of the New York Times, had this to say:

"It is encouraging that the U.S. Government has called for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela. However, this cannot take place in isolation from the unbanning of the ANC. It is only when all political organizations are allowed to organize freely within South Africa that there will be any possibility at all of a negotiated settlement toward a new South Africa, which will involve justice and freedom for all its citizens."

Chief Buthelezi, who has been described by the South African Government as an important, moderate leader with whom it could work, was reported in the June 3rd edition of the Washington Times as having said emphatically that he will not take part in talks unless Mandela is released and the ANC is recognized as a negotiating entity.

Secretary of State Shultz has also urged the South African Government to signal its willingness to search for a political compromise with the Black majority by freeing Mandela and negotiating with the ANC. And a State Department spokesman just recently indicated that the United States maintains "regular contacts" with the ANC.

But these efforts stop short of a public appeal by the United States to the South African Government. They do not carry the weight of the President of the United States saying it loud and clear. That, Mr. Chairman, is the purpose of House Resolution 373. By passage of this measure, the Congress is asking the President himself to use influence and the prestige of the Presidency with the South African Government by publicly urging it to take these steps toward peace rather than continue down the path of violence, destruction and bloodshed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman