

NELSON MANDELA

Freedom at 70

This June the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) launched its most ambitious project ever. The **Freedom at 70 Campaign** for the release of the imprisoned African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela will culminate in a national rally in London 17 July, the day before Mandela's 70th birthday.

Mandela's 70th Birthday Tribute took place, 11 June, at London's Wembley Stadium. Among the guests was the ANC President Oliver Tambo. Billed as the largest musical event in the world since Live Aid, the major international artists performing included Phil Collins, Midge Ure, Paul Young, Chubby Checker, Bryan Adams, Little Steven, Roberta Flack, Natalie Cole and Joan Armatrading.

The ten hour concert was hosted by celebrity guests Harry Belafonte, Whoopi Goldberg, Billy Connolly, Gregory Hines and Denzel Washington. BBC television and BBC radio broadcasted the event live and beamed it by satellite around the world, making it the largest television and radio concert ever.

The Nelson Mandela Freedom Rally, 17 July, is expected to draw tens of thousands of people. It will end the Nelson Mandela Freedom March, which started from Glasgow, Scotland, 12 June, and covers 530 miles. The march will be led by three former prisoners of the apartheid regime. The rally will be addressed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, General Secretary of SWAPO Andimba Toivo ja Toivo and *Cry Freedom* director Sir Richard Attenborough.

On 18 July, solidarity events will be held in many parts of the world to demand Mandela's freedom and that of all other South African political prisoners.



AAM President Archbishop Trevor Huddleston: "Our message today is very simple. Nelson Mandela must be free. We cannot allow the Pretoria regime to keep him incarcerated a day longer. The prospect that he could spend his 70th Birthday in prison is unacceptable." Photo - Nelson and Winnie Mandela on their wedding day, 1958.

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS POLITICAL PRISONER

Nelson Mandela was born on 18 July 1918. He obtained a degree in law from the University of South Africa. Ten years later he set up a legal firm in Johannesburg with Oliver Tambo. Together they defended hundreds of Africans charged under the apartheid laws. Mandela joined the African National Congress at the age of 25, and together with Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and others, was a driving force in the establishment of the ANC Youth League.

From 1952 onwards Mandela was subjected to repeated banning orders which severely restricted his political activity. But he continued to be the inspiration and force behind many different initiatives.

In June 1955 he played a key role in convening the Congress of the Peoples,

where the Freedom Charter was adopted.

On 5 December 1956 he was charged with high treason.

One hundred and fifty-six people were accused in the marathon treason trial arising out of the adoption of the Freedom Charter. The trial ended in March 1961.

After the Sharpsville massacre in March 1960, the ANC was banned and the organization reviewed its strategy of non-violent opposition. Mandela was given a task to form Unkhonto We Sizwe, Spear of the Nation, the armed wing of the ANC. He was arrested in August 1962.

First Mandela was sentenced to five years in prison and later, in the Rivonia Trial in June 1964, to life imprisonment.