

ANC split widens over path to reform

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JOHANNESBURG: The deputy president of the African National Congress, Mr Nelson Mandela, is facing his toughest challenge since he was released from prison in February — trying to persuade his national executive to continue talks with the South African Government on political reform.

The executive council began a two-day meeting at a secret venue outside Johannesburg yesterday to discuss the Government's Operation Iron Fist plan to quell township killings.

Sources said yesterday that Mr Mandela, supported by the ANC's foreign affairs specialist, Mr Govan Mbeki, had ar-

gued strongly that negotiations should continue.

But a leading member of the executive who is also a member of the South African Communist Party, said talks should be broken off and that the "armed struggle" be resumed.

Mr Mandela said on Tuesday that the ANC would not abandon talks "because we initiated them".

But he said if the executive committee disagreed with the steps to halt the township violence, "we will have to take a decision that will reverse almost everything that has been done since May", when both sides pledged to seek peaceful means to end apartheid.

Sources said the announce-

ment by police that they would equip vehicles with light machineguns was expected to be overruled by the President of South Africa, Mr De Klerk.

The Minister of State at the British Foreign Office, Mr William Waldegrave, was due to arrive in South Africa last night on a three-day visit.

He will meet Mr De Klerk, Mr Mandela and a range of political and business leaders, although the British embassy emphasised he would not act as an intermediary.

In Harare yesterday, delegates from Commonwealth nations urged the maintenance of international trade sanctions and other pressure on South Africa to ensure it

made good on promises to abolish apartheid.

Representatives of the 49 member countries meeting on the second day of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference echoed a warning from the President of Zimbabwe, Mr Mugabe, that only pressure would keep Pretoria from stalling on plans to end 42 years of white minority rule.

A spokesman for the delegates said although Mr De Klerk appeared genuine in his seven-month-old program of racial reform, he had a long way to go in bringing democracy to South Africa.

Australian delegate, the federal member for Lilley in

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Queensland, Ms Elaine Darling, said Mr De Klerk's reform agenda was "revolutionary", but support for the black opposition had to be maintained.

British delegate Mr Bernie Grant drew applause when he accused Whitehall of hypocrisy in rejecting sanctions against Pretoria.

"(The British Prime Minister) Mrs Thatcher told me after my visit to South Africa that sanctions don't work and you can imagine my surprise when two weeks ago I saw that Mrs Thatcher was the first to support sanctions against Iraq."

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