5.3.91

## AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Mission to the United States

### FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

Number of pages (cover sheet included) \_\_\_\_\_7



### AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Mission to the United States

May 1, 1991

#### POLITICAL PRISONERS AWAITING DEATH

Political prisoners on death row [approximately 40] and those released from death row to Pretoria Local Prison [18 including one death row trialist] commenced a hunger strike "to the death" in Pretoria Maximum Security [death row] and Pretoria Local Prisons today. Most will take water for the first seven days only. Umkhonto we Sizwe regional commander, Mzondelele Nondula, who recently had his appeal against his death sentence rejected is already refusing water.

Families, friends and supporters of these political prisoners will fast each Wednesday in support of the hunger strikers and their demands.

The statement from death row prisoners about the hunger strike which is in protest at the government reneging on its commitment in the Pretoria Minute of August 6, to release all political prisoners by April 30, 1991, reads:

"This was not an easy decision to take, neither do we believe it is a reckless decision. Our decision was influenced by political developments at home and abroad: the regime's reluctance to meet the preconditions set out under the Harare Declaration and the response of some other governments. Nowhere in that document is it stated or suggested that exploratory talks should be undertaken by the ANC or any other liberation movement before general negotiations commence. The ANC went out of its way to assist in any way it could, with the express intention of bringing a just and democratic order as speedily as possible. This resulted in the Groote Schuur and Pretoria summits whereupon the ANC and government agreed to a common commitment to the resolution of the existing climate of violence and intimidation from whatever quarter, as well as the commitment to stability and a peaceful process of negotiations, as contained in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Pretoria Minute.

6 . . . .

TEL: 202-543-9435

ANC/DC TEL: 202-543-9435 May 3,91 10:55 No.003 P.05

Unfortunately, this time we have no means to repeal this violence. Firstly, because we are in jail and secondly because our organisation has suspended the armed struggle [the wisdom of which decision we are beginning to doubt in the face of the attitude of the government].

In the light of our relative defencelessness against this violence we can resort to the only weapon left to us - the hunger strike.

But this is not to be a hunger strike of a few days. This is a strike to either our death or our release. We have conditioned our minds to accept the fact that we might never see our loved ones again. We have realised that we might die - after careful consideration we have come to the conclusion that we most probably will die because of the government's known insensitivity and intransigence. However, we aim to make every death as costly as possible to this government - a government which has never been and never will be our own.

So be it.

\* 1 0

3rd Floor. . . . Munich Re Centre
54 Sauer Street
Johannesburg



P.O. 80x 61884

Marshalltown, 2:07

Tel: 334-3301-8

Fax: 834-1019

Telex: 421252

# BRIEFING BY MATTHEW PHOSA ABOUT POLITICAL PRISONERS

The ANC is in agreement with the Human Rights Commission (H R C) about the figure of 1 146 clearly identified political prisoners, but subject to the qualifications that they state in their report Political Imprisonment in South Africa (April 1991 Special Report SR-10). However - as they clearly indicate - this is not an exhaustive figure, and major discrepancies have emerged in the Auditcommittee that was formed two weeks ago to try to come to a conclusion about the number of political prisoners. At the second meeting of the Auditcommittee when the H R C submitted their figures a senior member of the Department of Corrective Services, Gen. Monroe, mentioned that they have a list of 4000 unrest related prisoners, of which they are only prepared to consider 320 as possible political prisoners. The important question is on what basis do they make such a decission? This was said the same day that President De Klerk told the world that there are only about 200 political prisoners still in South African jails. We demand that this whole list of prisoners must also be the subject of detailed discussion and evaluation by the Auditcommittee. If we add the 1 146 clearly identified political prisone and 4 000 unrest related prisoners together there are still possibly over 5 000 political prisoners in jair.

In deciding who is a political prisoner the Government now narrows the original guidelines of what constitutes a political offence and makes a distinction between those who they call Security Prisoners (e.g. people who have been convicted of treason or under the provisions of the Internal Security Act), and unrest related prisoners who they don't necessarily regard as political prisoners. This is one of the major reasons for the difference between their figures and those mentioned by the ANC and the HRC. It is important to note that there is nothing in the Pretoria Minute that provides for such a distinction.

is, skweviva, D. Omar, M. Coleman and A. Chaskelson

May 3,91 10:55 No.003 P.07

ANC/DC

Despite the fact that they have all the necessary information available " The Government is not helping the A N G to identify those who qualify upon. The ANC has already announced our appointees 1 to the Indemnity

TEL: 202-543-9435 May



## AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Mission to the United States

May 1, 1991 - PRESS STATEMENT

Released by political prisoners at New Local Prison, Pretoria.

The only reason that we, the political prisoners currently being held at the Pretoria Local Prison, are in prison because we dared to destroy the system of Apartheid. A system which even the Nationalist Party government now purports to regard as "wrong" "evil" and a "sin in the eyes of God". Yet, we are still being incarcerated. The reason for us not having been released is, according the government, because we caused death and injury [in our quest to destroy this "sin in the eyes of God".] This reasoning is outrageous. How can this same government which developed the most sophisticated form of genocide decide to keep us in jail because we caused death and injury in our quest to resist this genocide?

The April 30th 1991 deadline (it is a deadline - see Pretoria Minute) for the release of political prisoners (including those who committed murder with a political motive - see Paragraph 6.5.2 [c] of the Joint ANC/Govt Working Group Report) has come and gone. And, once again the Nationalist Party government has shown its inability to be honest and to negotiate in good faith. Once again Nationalist Party political trickery is the order of the day.

We, like all other political prisoners in the country, have had high hopes of being able to contribute towards reconstruction and reconciliation with our oppressors and jailors - the Nationalist Party government. These hopes have now been dashed. The government's attitude towards political prisoners can hardly be described as creating conditions conducive to negotiation. In fact, the prospects of peace, reconstruction and reconciliation are now as remote as ever.

for us, there is still a war being waged. We continue to be victims of racist violence. Violence in the form of our incarceration, harassment and psychological torture.