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Department of External Affairs



Canada

Ministère des Affaires extérieures

Ottawa, Ontario

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October 26, 1978

Dear Dr. Penman,

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Don Jamieson, has asked me to reply to your recent letter concerning Solomon Mahlangu.

Canada has often intervened with the South African Government on behalf of those whose fundamental human rights were impinged upon as a result of their opposition to apartheid. It is not practicable, however, to intervene with the South African Government on all occasions which can be said to involve human rights. In cases when clear evidence exists of the repression of persons engaged in legitimate opposition to apartheid and there is a relationship between Canada and the person involved which makes the representations meaningful, the Government gives favourable consideration to representations or initiates them. While neither of these general factors appear to apply in Mr. Mahlangu's case we recognize that the death penalty is unduly harsh, especially in light of his youth. We therefore raised the matter with the South African Government and brought to its attention the concern expressed by many Canadians about Mr. Mahlangu and our earnest hope that clemency would be granted to him. We were informed only that the South African authorities consider that the judicial process has taken its course. It remains to be seen whether the interventions made on behalf of Mr. Mahlangu, including those by our own Embassy, will have the desired effect.

Yours sincerely,

Under-Secretary of State
for External Affairs

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