

STATEMENT BY NELSON MANDELA AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE

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Our country is in a very serious crisis.

The path of negotiations to bring about democracy is deadlocked. Millions are without jobs.

Hunger, poverty, crime and fear stalk the lives of all South Africans. Millions of rands of taxpayer's money, set aside for black areas, are embezzled by government officials without being

brought to justice. Investor confidence is at an all-time low. Our country is being torn to shreds

by violence in the black townships.

There is a way forward. It depends on how the National Party government responds to our efforts

to break the negotiations deadlock and take practical steps to end the violence. - Central to the problem is that the National Party government continues to close its eyes to the

seriousness of the crisis. They deliberately mislead people by saying that it is an artificial

crisis created by the ANC.

The essence of the crisis is that the ruling National Party keeps looking for ways to exercise

power even if it loses a democratic election.

The main task of the ANC is to bring democracy to the nation as a whole. This means: Secondly, the political parties which lose in such elections should go into opposition. One of the

best safeguards for democracy is to have an open Parliamentary opposition.

The National Party instead wants a minority veto power under the guise of so-called power-sharing.

The regime claims this is necessary to protect white South Africans. However, it is now clear to us that they are not concerned about the interests of ordinary white

South Africans. Their real concern is to protect the power, privileges and greed of the National

Party leadership and top ranking officials in the security forces.

The drafting and adoption of a democratic constitution will be a very special event in the history

of South Africa. It is a task for the elected representatives of all the people. Negotiations will

fail if we cannot agree on a democratic and sovereign Constituent Assembly.

The situation is explosive. Violence, murder and destruction of property has become a way of

life. The government has failed to protect ordinary citizens.

The Goldstone Commission says that Battalion 32 which is made up of foreign mercenaries from

Angola and Mozambique should not be deployed internally. Why does the government refuse to listen? The Commission says it is wrong to use former Koevoet members from Namibia in the South African Police Force. The government ignores this recommendation. Top officers of the COB, which was part of the hit-squads, destroy incriminating documents and give false evidence. They remain unpunished. Instead, they are given big pensions and re-integrated into the SADF. Yet, the government refuses to acknowledge that it is party to the violence. In 1986 I initiated efforts from prison to persuade the government to negotiate a solution with the ANC. I was deeply aware of the disaster facing our country.. The ANC seeks peace and stability. We remain committed to genuine negotiations to bring about democracy. But, we shall not, and cannot, abandon the struggle of our people to bring about true democracy. We call on all to ensure that the mass campaign for democracy is peaceful and disciplined.

We want free and fair elections for a Constituent Assembly to take place by the end of this year. All South Africans, black and white together, have a deep interest in making this possible. Let us all take our places on the side of democracy, peace and justice.