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AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

OPEN LETTER TO STATE PRESIDENT DE KLERK AND HIS CABINET FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE ANC

1.0. Since the outbreak of violence that began in Natal the country has witnessed a scale of bloodletting hitherto unknown. Estimates provided by agencies who have been monitoring the situation place the numbers of those who have lost their lives in excess of 5,000.

Since the signing of the accord between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party on 29 January 1991, the scale of violence has not diminished. On the contrary, it has assumed a more organised and systematic character. In many parts of Natal the violence has taken on a random character, to an extent that it can be regarded as directed against the community itself.

Death and the destruction of homes and property on such a scale would be considered a national disaster in any sane society. The scale of the human tragedy alone provides sufficient motivation for us to address you with our grave concerns.

1.1. Throughout the period in question there have been clearly discernible patterns in this unfolding violence that indicates disturbing features which by now should have been noted and be pre-occupying the attentions of the authorities. We are, like many others, alarmed at the degree of inaction on the part of the authorities.

1.2. In almost every instance of violence that has erupted on the Reef, for example, the following pattern has emerged. A group of individuals, drawn from a specific area of the country, sharing a common language and publicly identifying themselves with a specific political party have established control over a migrant labourers' hostel through acts of intimidation. Those who would not submit to such pressure are subsequently driven out of the hostel. These individuals constitute themselves into a group, with insignia for common identification (usually a red head band). Supported by others of like purpose, bussed in from other areas, they then stage a provocative armed demonstration through the township, escorted by the police.

1.3. Without exception, the townships that have suffered armed demonstrations did not previously have any visible presence of the Inkatha Freedom Party. In all the cases in question the majority of participants in such demonstrations have been bussed in from other localities.

The People Shall Govern!

Instances when the police have averted attacks or deterred the perpetrators of such attacks are extremely rare. Even among cases where the assailants have been identified, the number of them who have been arrested or charged is desisory.

1.4. In at least five separate incidents, all of which occurred on the Reef during the past nine months, armed gangs of men have launched well organised and coordinated attacks against commuters on the trains between the townships and Johannesburg city centre; on the homes of bereaved families during funeral vigils; and on selected hostels. Those responsible for these actions are distinguished by their remarkable capacity to evade detection by the police and other security services. In each of these instances, the authorities were advised well in advance to take precautionary measures but they failed to do so.

1.5. Since 22 July 1990, on at least three separate occasions when the authorities were summoned to assist or to avert violence, they have themselves committed acts of violence that have resulted in death. A case in point is that of Sebokeng on 3 September 1990. Thirty-eight (38) people had been killed in a pre-dawn attack on a hostel in Sebokeng. A judicial inquiry subsequently found that members of the South African Defence Force, who had been called to the scene to contain a potentially explosive situation, opened fire on a crowd, killing four persons and inflicting grave injuries on several others.

1.6. An equally disturbing case is that which occurred in Daveyton, Benoni, on 24 March 1991. The known facts indicate that after a large number of persons were bussed into Daveyton, a provocative armed demonstration was staged from the hostels to a nearby stadium to hold a rally. The police had been advised of the probability of violence by the township residents and were patrolling the streets. A group of residents, concerned because of the armed demonstration, assembled on an open space to discuss their response. The police opened fire on this group in an unprovoked attack, causing the deaths of at least 12 persons.

Every effort had been made by the local Civic Association to gain the cooperation of the police. An agreement had even been reached that no armed demonstration would be permitted and that those bearing any weapons would be disarmed. The police did not honour this agreement and permitted an armed demonstration. And rather than building on the spirit of trust, established through previous negotiations, fired on an unoffending crowd. A number of those injured in this incident have subsequently been arrested, some taken from their hospital beds, and are in detention.

The police have made counter claims to the effect that they were under attack. Based on previous experience we have reason to place no confidence in these claims.

An alarming feature of the violence is the role being played by the Kwa-Zulu Police in support of armed groups in launching attacks on specific areas. In January 1991 a large contingent of armed men, reinforced by the Kwa-Zulu Police invaded the Ndwendwe area of Osindisweni and made off with 30 head of cattle.

1.7. There has been a startling increase in the use of automatic weapons, assault rifles and other firearms on the Reef since September 1990. Despite repeated efforts on the part of the ANC, Civics and other democratic bodies to assist the police and other government intelligence services with information pertaining to these arms and the trade in arms, not a single arrest has been made and not a single arms cache uncovered, nor has the supply line been interrupted. The apparent incapacity of the South African authorities in this regard beggars description.

2.0. It is evident from our observation and that of others that the peaks in these waves of violence coincide uncannily with ANC-launched campaigns and with mass campaigns launched by other elements of the democratic movement.

Recent pronouncements by a political figure serving in the anti-democratic and unpopular structures foisted on the African urban population by the government, indicate that it is their intention to resist expressions of opposition to these bodies by a resort to armed intimidation and violence. Direct links between such expressed intentions and the acts of violence that have occurred have been drawn by this same individual. The concerted effort to draw councillors into the ranks of the Inkatha Freedom Party with the promise that it will protect them against mass pressure, also suggests the intention of using violence to ward off demands that councillors resign.

It is the considered opinion of the ANC that it is inconceivable that the authorities lack the capacity or the skill to prevent the violent deeds we have enumerated. We suspect that, at best, the feeble response on the part of the State betrays an absence of will to take measures adequate to avert violence, detect and bring the guilty parties to justice, because the perpetrators of this violence are providing a line of defence for government institutions that would otherwise have been rendered dysfunctional.

2.1. Since the outbreak of this current cycle of violence, there has been an avalanche of charges of police partiality, connivance and complicity in acts of violence. Apart from shrill denials from the relevant ministry, no adequate explanation has been forthcoming regarding the acts or omissions of the authorities.

It is evident that the killings, maimings and beatings that have occurred have greatly inflamed feelings of ethnic antagonism among various sections of the African people; have distracted public attention from the root causes of poverty, hunger, deprivation and want in our country, and have rendered it more difficult to achieve united action among the African people for generally accepted and commendable goals.

Those responsible for fomenting this violence have the clear intention of sowing divisions and stoking up a psychosis of fear, insecurity and mutual distrust among the African people. At the same time, they hope to prey on the worst fears and prejudices of our White compatriots and thus make them more apprehensive about a democratic transformation.

We are persuaded that the government's evident reluctance to act with expedition and vigour against the instigators of this violence betrays a hope that their actions will rebound to the government's favour in the short and intermediate term.

2.2. The impact of this cycle of violence is that it has raised the costs/risks entailed in being a member of or of being identified with the ANC and its allies. In certain cities and rural areas it has resulted in 'no-go areas' from which ANC members, activities and symbols are excluded, not by the law, but by gangs of hoodlums and vigilantes. This is designed to weaken the credibility of the ANC, limit its scope for growth and disintegrate its new legal structures.

This has proved a far more effective means of political repression than the legal measures previously employed by the state to crush the democratic opposition. Its aim is to inflate the image of the Inkatha Freedom Party from that of a minor to the rank of the third major player on the political arena.

2.3. The ANC is of the view that the government's equivocal attitude to the cycle of violence reflects either an attitude of cynical irresponsibility or is evidence of connivance at acts of organised terror in the hope that they will succeed in destroying or seriously crippling the ANC.

The government's inaction calls into serious question its true intentions and sincerity regarding the entire peace process and the democratisation of South Africa. In view of this the ANC demands:

- * That the government take legislative measures during the current session of parliament to outlaw the carrying of weapons, traditional or otherwise, at public assemblies, processions, rallies, etc.

- * The dismissal of Ministers Adriaan Vlok and General Magnus Malan from public office and the restitution of all the officers of the SADF and SAP who bear direct responsibility for the setting up, and management of, the crimes and misdemeanours of the C.C.B. and other hit squads.

- * The visible, public dismantling and disarming of all special counter-insurgency units such as the Askaris, Battalion 32, the C.C.B., Koevoet, the Z Squad, etc. and the establishment of a multi-party Commission to oversee this process.

- * The immediate suspension from duty of all police officers and constables who were implicated in the massacres at Sebokeng on 22 March 1990 and the commencement of legal proceedings against them; the immediate suspension from duty of all the police officers and constables responsible for the shootings in Daveyton, Benoni on 24 March 1991, pending a Commission of Inquiry into that incident.

- * Satisfactory assurances that in future the SAP, SADF and other security organs will employ acceptable and civilised methods of crowd control; and that the issuance of live ammunition to the police on such occasions shall be disallowed.

- * Effective steps are taken to begin the process of phasing out the hostels and other labour compounds and transforming them into family units and single occupancy flats.

- * The establishment of an independent Commission of Inquiry to receive, investigate and report on all complaints of misconduct by the police and other security services.

2.4. If by 9 May 1991 these demands have not been met, the ANC shall:

- (a) Suspend any further discussion with the government on the All Party Congress; and
- (b) Suspend all exchanges with the government on the future constitution of our country.

5th April 1991
Johannesburg
South Africa.

Annexure: Roster of Significant Incidents of Police Inaction.

Annexure: ROSTER OF SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS OF POLICE INACTION

1. 22 July 1990. Sebokeng, near Vereeniging. After an exchange of correspondence between the offices of the law firm Cheadle, Thompson and Haysom, the offices of General Erasmus of the SAP, and the Minister of Law and Order, the law firm warning of the imminent danger of armed attack and violence in the event of an armed demonstration through the township by Inkatha supporters, the SAP did not disarm the Inkatha supporters but escorted them to a sports ground in the township, from where they launched an attack on the residents which resulted in the loss of at least 30 lives. To date no arrests have been made.

2. July 1990. After repeated warnings to the offices of General Erasmus, General van der Merwe and Minister Vlok, from the offices of the law firm Cheadle, Thompson and Haysom, that an attack was being planned against commuters on a train travelling from the city centre to Soweto, at Inkabizane station, no police were dispatched to the station to deter the attackers. An attack indeed occurred and police who arrived on the scene late did not intervene. No arrests have been made.

3. 1 September 1990. At Tembisa and Thokoza. Residents suffered an armed attack by men wearing the red-headband recognition insignia. Witnesses to and victims of the attack attest to police complicity and have identified specific police officers as culpable. The SAP responded to the alarm raised four hours late.

4. 28 October 1990. Naledi. An armed attack was launched on the township residents by a gang of armed men, sporting the red-headband recognition insignia. The police had previously been warned to take preventative measures. 16 people killed and 33 injured.

5. 9 December 1990. Thokoza. Police were warned of an imminent attack by Inkatha supporters on Thokoza residents; no deterrent action was taken. 9 people were subsequently killed, 58 were hospitalised, 47 of whom sustained gunshot wounds.

6. 12 January 1991. Sebokeng. A home-owner and minister of the church warned the police of the clear and present threat of attack on mourners at a vigil. No deterrent action was taken. 35 people killed.

7. Zomkhizwe squatter camp. Until it was attacked in October 1990 the camp had been a stronghold of the ANC. The attack, according to eyewitnesses and victims, was conducted by Inkatha supporters, wearing the red-headband for mutual recognition, with the support of the SAP. The residents were all evicted from their shacks, their goods confiscated and the shacks occupied by Inkatha supporters. Not a single former resident has since been restored to his/her home and no arrests have been made.

8. 24 March 1991, Muchison. IFP supporters from Nyandezulu invaded Muchison. SADF drove the people out of the area, permitting the IFP supporters to occupy the area. Despite repeated appeals the SAP have refused to assist the rightful home-owners to recover their houses.

9. 26 March 1991, Alexandra Township. A bereaved family made repeated requests for police protection against possible attack on a funeral vigil. The township was under intensive police patrols as a declared 'unrest area', yet the police took very feeble steps to secure the mourners and withdrew their guard after a few hours. When the attack indeed occurred, though the police were within hearing range, they did not respond. 13 people were killed.



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**ANC COMMENT ON PRESIDENT DE KLERK'S STATEMENT
6 APRIL, 1991**

The African National Congress notes with great regret the tawdry response by President De Klerk to our appeal that he take urgent measures to save the lives of South African citizens. His response confirms our impression that the extensive loss of black peoples lives has made no impact on him or his government.

To make so petty a response and say that the ANC is trying to draw political gain from the violence, or that our endeavours to protect the lives of our people and keep negotiations on track, reflect internal problems within our ranks, underscores precisely why we say that the government has no regard for black life.

The violence pervading our country, in any decent society, would be regarded as a national disaster. In 1990 alone 2,900 people were killed. An estimated 400 people have already died this year.

The demands we are making are very reasonable indeed. To reiterate some of the key issues:

- * legislation to be passed in this session of parliament to ensure no carrying of weapons of any kind at public gatherings
- * the public disbandment of those bodies that have been, and continue to be, responsible for death squad activities, namely the CCB and Askaris
- * the removal from our country of mercenary forces, specifically the notorious 32 Battalion and Koevoet
- * that security organs use civilised methods of crowd control so that lives can be protected
- * that immediate efforts be made to address the whole hostel system
- * and that there be an independent commission of inquiry into all the violence.

Furthermore, there have been widespread calls for the resignation of both Malan and Vlok, who are the Ministers responsible for the actions of the security forces under their command, from every quarter of South African society. Given their glaring inability to do their jobs and account for the serious crimes committed by their forces, this demand cannot be said to be unreasonable.

The ANC initiated the entire peace process. It is the ANC alone that has displayed a real commitment to keeping the process on track. It is we who lose the most from the violence. It is our people who are being massacred. It is our resources that are absorbed in combating the violence. It is our ability to organise on the ground and build the infrastructure necessary to sustain

the peace process that is severely hampered. The climate for free political activity, so essential to the process of transformation, has been completely undermined. Our efforts for the democratisation of society, including creation of a culture of political tolerance, are being thwarted.

This is yet one more instance in which the victims of violence and oppression are being blamed for the acts being perpetrated against them. Finally, De Klerk says that we are moving the goalposts. Thus far we have witnessed many fine words but few deeds that match them. In accordance with the agreements reached between ourselves and the government, all political prisoners should be released by 31 January, 1991, and all exiles should have the right to return by 30 April, 1991. The reality is far from what the publicity of Pretoria would have us believe.

There are 282 ongoing political trials, affecting 1,565 accused; There are 1,363 people still in prison for political offences, and a further 1,100 for what are termed unrest-related offences. Within the last few weeks, the death sentences imposed on two soldiers of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Nondula and Mncube, were upheld, while Wycliffe Myeza was sentenced to 24 years in jail. We ask: is this really an emptying of the jails as per the agreement reached.

De Klerk's attempt to shift public attention by references to the ANC's remarks about Inkatha smacks of puerility. The issue we are focused on is the role and responsibility of the government and its security forces for resolving the violence.

The ANC will continue, as a matter of urgency, with ongoing discussions with the Inkatha Freedom Party, at all levels, in our attempts to reduce conflict and bring an end to the violence.

We are firmly committed to the peace process. The crisis in this process is greater than we have ever experienced before. We have taken the drastic step of placing these demand before De Klerk and his government precisely because we want to ensure that negotiations proceed in a meaningful manner.

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P.O. Box 61884,
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insecurity and mutual distrust among the African people. At the same-time, they hope to prey on the worst fears and prejudices of our White compatriots and thus make them more apprehensive about a democratic transformation.

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5 April 1991.

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