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NM0/018/2229/14



## **AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

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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

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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.

**Issued by:**  
**The Department of Information and Publicity,**  
**P.O. Box 61884,**  
**Marshalltown 2307,**  
**Johannesburg.**  
**6th April 1991**