

**A STATEMENT OF INTENT AND DECLARATION MADE BY  
POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE ROBBEN ISLAND MAXIMUM PRISON**

---

We, the political prisoners in the Robben Island Maximum Prison, in South Africa, having examined, analysed and assessed the political and historical events, trends and developments in our country, South Africa, as well as within the international community, and noting the serious and primary effects of these political and historical events, trends and developments upon the broad liberation struggle of the oppressed and exploited people of South Africa, declare that:-

1. There is a crying need in our country for the continued existence and development of committed and principled cadres as well as unwavering political leadership of the broad liberation movement to articulate and aggregate the real needs, aspirations, ideals and goals of the oppressed and exploited people.

In this regard, we have availed ourselves and expressed through active political involvement in the broad liberation struggle our readiness to serve the oppressed and exploited community in furtherance of our people's aspirations. We consider our continued incarceration in the racist dungeons of South Africa, the persistent conducting of political trials in the various courts of law, the sentencing to imprisonment and/or death of political activists and combatants of the liberation movements under laws our people had no part in their making; all these and other nefarious activities represent an orchestrated attempt and strategy of the Pretoria regime to thwart the ultimate realisation of our peoples' demands and aspirations.

Conscious of our historical mission in the political struggle in our country, we challenge the application of the racist strategy as indicated above, that seeks to ensure and sustain the underdevelopment of committed and principled cadreship and unwavering political leadership of the broad liberation movement. We therefore call upon the racist Pretoria regime to cease forthwith applying the said strategy.

**In plain terms we demand that:**

the racist Pretoria regime release unconditionally all political detainees, political prisoners and combatants in its various racist prisons and death cells in South Africa. All political trials must be terminated forthwith and our combatants set free unconditionally.

2. Noting the deliberate and tacit obfuscation of our status as political prisoners in South Africa, and mindful of the tacit definition of a political prisoner provided by the De Klerk regime in its declaration of the so-called amnesty of political prisoners, we further affirm that:
  - (a) We are part of the political leadership and cadreship of the broad liberation movement in our country. We uphold the aims, principles, ideals and goals of the African National Congress, the Black Consciousness Movement and the Pan Africanist Congress. We are aware of the continued incarceration of other captured combatants and political activists who subscribe to the aims and principles of those political organisations, and are kept in custody elsewhere in the country. We are equally conscious of the existence in other



## MEMORANDUM OF THE ANC BEHIND ENEMY LINES ON ROBBER ISLAND

We the Political Prisoners and Members of the African National Congress incarcerated on Robben Island -

1. note the positive course chartered by President F.W. De Klerk and his Nationalist Party Government, mainly the unbanning of the Peoples' Organisations such as the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, the United Democratic Front, Congress of South African Trade Unions and others;
2. further note the worldwide response to these dramatic and far-reaching measures embarked upon by the Nationalist Party Government;
3. reaffirm our unquestionable commitment to contribute towards the total destruction of apartheid and the creation of a non-racial democratic South Africa;
4. further re-affirm that these drastic changes are as a result of the tireless and heroic struggles waged by our oppressed and exploited masses and the world at large;
5. realise that the State of Emergency is still one of the obstacles in the way of free political development to a democratic future;
6. pledge our unwavering loyalty to our glorious organisations and our tried and tested leadership;
7. endorse unreservedly the Principles of the Harare Declaration as a basis for negotiations in South Africa;
8. commit ourselves to furthering the noble objectives of our organisation for a peaceful political solution in South Africa which would contribute towards world peace and progress;
9. observe that the conditions of our imprisonment are progressively deteriorating and degenerating in proportion to the rate of the so-called reformed and renewal pursued by the Nationalist Government;
10. are convinced that there is no more legal, political, security and moral justification for our further imprisonment and incarceration when our organisation is now a legal political organisation and our further confinement does not create a climate for the process of negotiations to begin.

**THEREFORE** we, comrades, brothers and members of the African National Congress reject in toto F.W. De Klerk's categorization of political prisoners and we say all politically motivated offenders are political prisoners, and we now demand from the South African Government -

1. the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners;
2. the lifting of the State of Emergency.



We therefore demand that:

- (i) the State of Emergency be uplifted forthwith. Its continued existence would simply imply that the release of all political prisoners and other combatants whose demands we are making, is virtually a temporary transfer of these political prisoners from one prison to another;
  - (ii) the soldiers of the South African Defence Force, kitskonstabels, racist police and other agents of the apartheid regime must be withdrawn immediately.
4. We resolve and dedicate our collective energies towards ensuring that the De Klerk regime does not succeed in hoodwinking the international community and our people into believing that:
- (i) the mere declaration that our liberation movements are unbanned and restrictions on political organisations and individuals no longer apply create a sufficient base to conduct our political activities and increase the strength and fighting capacity of our people;
  - (ii) the piecemeal refinement of racist capitalist principles by means of a so-called reform policy of the National Party government is sufficient to believe that apartheid no longer exists. We call upon the present De Klerk government to demonstrate its sincerity in moving away from the system of apartheid by accepting and recognising the need to actualize the principle of one person one vote.
5. Having experienced the conditions of living in the racist prisons, we demand an immediate attention to these in all prisons.
6. We demand an immediate and unhampered consultation with the political leadership of our political organisations as well as our legal representatives to discuss and mandate them on all our demands.

Until the De Klerk government accedes to our demands, we, the political prisoners in South Africa are embarking upon a Hunger Strike Action.

ooo0ooo



# **ROBBEN ISLAND HUNGER STRIKE**

## **BRIEF REPORT ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS**

28 FEBRUARY 1990

The following report is compiled primarily from the information that we have gathered from the families visiting on the Island over the past few days.

### **DETAILS OF HUNGER STRIKE**

1. The hunger strike started officially on Monday morning, 26 February 1990 when the prisoners refused to take their breakfast.
2. All of the about 346 prisoners on the Island are participating in the hunger strike, ie those from the African National Congress (+- 300), the Pan Africanist Congress (+- 40) and the Black Consciousness Movement (+- 10). The figures are very rough estimates and are subject to verification.
3. The following prisoners are not on full hunger strike, but are on a "slow" strike where they only take one meal per day.  
those who are medically unfit  
those working in the kitchen (+- 10) since they have to perform strenuous manual labour
4. We will hopefully get an accurate count of the number of persons on hunger strike soon, but a rough initial estimate would be about 300.
5. The hunger strike is intended to be indefinite until the demand for release has been met.

### **THE HUNGER STRIKE COMMITTEE**

6. A joint committee of 10 persons have been elected by the prisoners. It consists of 4 persons each from the ANC and PAC, and 2 from the BCM.
7. There is an agreement between the different organisations that no single organisation will call off the hunger strike on its own.
8. The hunger strike committee has demanded to see its lawyers. Its demand is that the lawyers must negotiate on behalf of the committee. In the past the Prisons Service have refused such requests, and thus far there has been no response to the demand from the Prisons Service.

### **ALLEGATION THAT HUNGER STRIKERS ARE IN POSSESSION OF FOOD**

9. The Prisons Service has indicated that the prisoners are in possession of their own food supplies and that this somehow means that they are not really on hunger strike.
10. The correct situation is that all prisoners on notch 4, ie the highest privilege level, are allowed to order certain foodstuffs. This is the case in all prisons where prisoners or detainees have gone on hunger strike.
11. In fact the hunger strikers on Robben Island have gone further than in previous hunger strikes in that they have put all their available food supplies in one central cell where nobody has access to it.

### **DEMANDS**



12. The hunger strikers' primary demand is to be released unconditionally. The full set of demands is set out in the attached annexure.
13. In addition the ANC comrades have also prepared a memorandum.
14. The hunger strikers have also demanded that they be allowed to consult with the leadership of their organisations.
15. The hunger strike was initially planned on the issue of the conditions in the prison. The hunger strikers have, however, decided not to focus on this issue. The only point they want to raise in this regard is that most of their complaints relate to the fact that they are treated as ordinary criminals, whereas they regard themselves as prisoners of war and demand to be treated as such. This would entail many rights which they do not enjoy at present, eg to receive food and reading material from their families and to be visited more regularly.
16. The PAC is not supporting the demand for the release of the hunger strikers. They say that they are not prepared to make demands on an illegitimate government as this would be to recognize the government. They have, however, gone on hunger strike in solidarity with the other prisoners.
17. The hunger strikers are particularly upset about the narrowness of De Klerk's definition of political prisoners. They demand that all persons convicted for politically motivated offences against apartheid should be regarded as political prisoners. This would include public violence offenders, conscientious objectors and others who the state has chosen to charge with common law offences such as attempted murder or setting of explosions.
18. The hunger strikers also want to focus attention on the fact that only 7 of the 353 prisoners on Robben Island have been released since De Klerk's announcement.