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Neo Mnumzana is the Chief Representative of the Observer Mission of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa to the United Nations in New York. He was interviewed for Palestine Focus at the "Beyond Containment" conference in Washington, DC in May 1988.

PF: How does the ANC view the uprising in the West Bank and Gaza? What similarities or differences do you see in terms of the uprising in South Africa?

NM: First of all, one needs to find out the parallels between Zionism and apartheid. Both are based on ideologies that preach a supremacy of one people over another, and they have translated this ideology into a constitutional reality in Israel, and in South Africa. Both are based on the uprooting of an indigenous people and the takeover of the Palestinian and South African peoples' land, by Zionism in Israel and by the Afrikaners in South Africa. In both cases, you are confronted with a situation which the people must, inevitably, find unacceptable, where they will, inevitably, engage in a struggle to correct the injustices of apartheid and Zionism.

The current uprisings represent a very important landmark in the road of the Palestinian struggle, for their right to determine their destiny, to create a Palestinian state and a homeland. As in all struggles, there is an element of spontaneity, which reflects the degree to which the wretchedness of the people, imposed by Zionism, has frustrated the people. There is an element of organization, also, which reflects the political work which the PLO, the sole authentic representative

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of the Palestinian people, has been doing. As was the case when similar uprisings started in South Africa in 1976, we think that uprisings in the occupied territories are going to become a permanent feature of the situation in Palestine until the problem in that country is resolved, and the Palestinians win their right to determine their destiny.

Palestinian people to have their right to determine their destiny recognized. Again, as is the case in South Africa, they have responded by imposing censorship on the coverage of the uprisings. One, to try and hide from international view, the crimes that they perpetrate against the Palestinian people, in the same way that apartheid tries

When we look at what the Palestinians are doing, we see ourselves. When we look at the Zionist state, we see the apartheid state

Israel, of course, has responded to those uprisings in exactly the same way that apartheid responded, and continues to respond, to the uprisings in South Africa, with more and more violence, which represents a refusal to acknowledge reality.

It has become urgently necessary for the

to hide the crimes that they perpetrate against the people of South Africa. Two, and in the strategic sense even more important, Israel is trying to hide the fact that there is a liberation movement inside Palestine, which translates into the possibility of Zionism losing control of the situation, in the same way that apartheid has been trying to hide from the international community the fact that it has lost control of the situation in South Africa. These are the more important similarities that we see.

PF: When the South African government did its news blackout, it had an effect on the movement here. Do you feel that Israel will attempt to cover up, too?

NM: Certainly they are. The censorship in South Africa has had the effect of demobilizing certain components of the anti-apartheid solidarity movement in the United States. Largely because, regrettable as it is, it is true that in the United States if an issue is not seen on television, if it's not on the front pages of the newspapers, it ceases to exist. But I think in the case of what is happening in the occupied territories, we want to profit from our experience on the effect of the press being in South Africa, and try to avoid a similar outcome. This means all those people who support the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people led by the PLO, need to develop means of making information available about what is happening. It means, in general, and this applies to the entire broad front of solidarity movements, that they must develop a counter-information service. We must utilize whatever resources we have to keep the issue alive in the public awareness.