

## THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA

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"While the basic structure of apartheid remains intact, there was some improvement in practice on some human rights fronts through non-enforcement of some existing racial laws."

Dear friends:

On December 10, 1981, Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker made this statement in testimony before the House Africa Subcommittee. His testimony was designed to justify the administration's policy of "constructive engagement" which has led to a growing alliance between Washington and Pretoria.

Crocker's assessment of the human rights situation in South Africa is contradicted by the facts, however. The day before Crocker's testimony, Thozamile Gqweta, the president of the militant South Africa Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), was detained. His detention came after his mother and uncle had been burned to death in a suspicious fire in their home on November 1st. During their funeral march on November 8th, the police opened fire on the mourners killing Gqweta's longtime girlfriend.

In addition, there have been massive arrests, detentions, and bannings over the last six months. During November and December, the apartheid authorities launched a new crackdown on trade-unionists, student leaders, and journalists. The killing also continues. On November 20, Griffith Mxenge, a lawyer who defended political prisoners and who counselled Gqweta and his union, SAAWU, was found murdered and his body mutilated. Shortly after his murder, two colleagues in Mxenge's law firm were detained.

These incidents are just a few of the many that have occurred recently, demonstrating that the human rights situation in South Africa is not improving, but worsening. Similarly, on the international front, South Africa still maintains illegal control over Namibia and continues to stall on the settlement plan. Pretoria launched another devastating raid into Angola during November, further disrupting that besieged country and killing SWAPO members. These developments discredit Crocker's above statement and stand as a fundamental refutation to his claim that "constructive engagement" is working. Today marks the first anniversary of the Reagan Administration and its Southern Africa policy; the only thing it has achieved is to encourage South African aggression both internally and externally.

The administration's response to events in South Africa has been to move even closer to the racist regime. Most recently, the administration has permitted the sale of highly technical computers to South Africa, including one to the Atlas Aircraft Corporation, a subsidiary of ARMSCOR, the South African armaments parastatal corporation. The export controls which presently prohibit non-military sales to the South African military and police are under review and it is expected that they will be substantially loosened when the decision is made sometime in February. Furthermore, Herman Nickel, a strong advocate of U.S. corporate

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investment in South Africa has now been nominated as U.S. ambassador to South Africa.

Despite all this however, I write you in hope. A year ago, the situation looked even worse. Many of us felt a sense of fear, foreboding, and uncertainty. The tasks ahead seemed more difficult and more overwhelming. But over the past year, the victories of the Washington Office on Africa have been even more impressive because of the tremendous difficulties we have encountered -- and overcome. While not stopping the growing U.S.-South Africa alliance, we have indeed slowed it down.

- \*\* We waged a very successful campaign to prevent the repeal of the Clark Amendment, prohibiting U.S. military aid to factions in Angola.
- \*\* We lobbied successfully to have the funding restored for the U.N. South Africa Trust Fund which provides legal aid and humanitarian relief to opponents of South Africa's apartheid policy.
- \*\* We were an important part of the coalition which forced the withdrawal of Ernest Lefever's nomination as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.
- \*\* We were active participants in the coalition that prevented the South African rugby team, the Springboks, from playing in all but one municipal facility during their U.S. tour.

The enclosed update provides a summary of some of these victories.

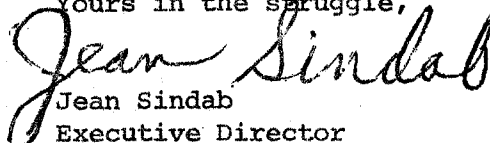
But the most important task we accomplished during this first year of "constructive engagement" was to demonstrate that something could be done -- that raising the visibility of issues, political mobilization, and political action all could produce success. That is why these victories are yours as well. Without the political and financial support you gave us in 1981, we would not have gotten the results we did. With your continuing support, we can start 1982 full of confidence and vitality for the tasks ahead.

We plan to continue to closely monitor developments in the administration and Congress concerning Southern Africa. We are also planning to launch a campaign aimed at stopping U.S.-South African nuclear collaboration and to produce a special resource on this issue. Further, we are intensifying our campaign to have state and local legislators introduce legislation calling for the withdrawal of public monies from corporations investing in South Africa.

With the apartheid regime increasing its internal oppression and its external aggression, the Washington Office on Africa needs your continuing political and financial support now more than ever. A recent rise in third-class postage makes your support even more critical. Without it, we will be unable to afford to send out additional mailings. These are difficult times, we know, but we ask you to give as generously as possible. If you give \$25 or more, we will send you one of two excellent new books on South Africa: 1) Profile of Women, a new book on women struggling against apartheid; or 2) Remember Soweto: Conversations with Freedom Fighters.

Please send in your contribution today. We wish you a healthy, happy New Year and thank you for your support.

Yours in the struggle,

  
Jean Sindab  
Executive Director