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TALKING POINTS ON SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS IN "HOMELAND" JAILS

1. Section 2.3 (6) of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA) states explicitly:

the term 'South Africa' includes . . . the 'bantustans' or 'homelands', to which South African blacks are assigned on the basis of ethnic origin, including the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, and Venda.

The provisions of the CAAA apply to all areas under the control of the South African government or South African government-created authorities. Neither Congress nor the Executive branch has ever recognized the "homelands" or legitimated the South African government's attempt to absolve itself of responsibility for these regions.

2. The "homeland" administrations were created by the South African government as a means of extending white control over the black population. They are unambiguously constructs of apartheid. The "homeland" governments installed and sustained by Pretoria have typically resorted to repression to maintain control over a hostile population. "Homeland" security forces collaborate with and are reinforced by South African security forces.

3. In Bophuthatswana, one of the "homelands" on which Pretoria has conferred sham "independence", 166 individuals remain imprisoned on purely political charges. Many have been convicted of high treason, a charge which both the ANC and the South African government recognized as strictly political in the Pretoria Minute of August 6, 1990.

4. The U.S. State Department claims that the South African government has released all those prisoners which the Bush administration defines as political prisoners. However, the State Department's definition of political prisoner should not be permitted supersede the definition worked out between the South African government and the African National Congress.

5. President Bush claims that the South African government cannot be held responsible for prisoners incarcerated by "homeland" authorities. However, many of these prisoners were arrested and detained by the South African security forces in the first place.

6. Both President Bush and the South African government have been distorting the facts about political prisoners in order to meet their own objectives. The South African government has been consistently underestimating the number of prisoners who meet the "political" criteria set out in the Pretoria Minute. In April 1991, De Klerk said that all but 200 political prisoners had been released. Since that time, the government has released 500-600 more. Independent human rights organizations estimate that at least 850 political prisoners remain in jail throughout South Africa.

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