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AFSC STATEMENT on SOUTH AFRICA
at South African Embassy

September 27, 1985

The future of South Africa will be determined by South Africans--and particularly by the majority who have been excluded from political power. The United States, however, can assist or hinder the inevitable and necessary process of change.

If the U.S. wants to play a positive role in the struggle for freedom in South Africa, it must understand that apartheid must be abolished. It is not a system that can be reformed. Changes, whether proposed by the South African government or from outside, that represent gradual repeal or modification of apartheid's excesses--but which leave in place its fundamental structures--will have little effect on the lives of the majority of South Africans. Meaningful change requires comprehensive repeal of all of apartheid's legal underpinnings: especially the Group Areas Act, the Constitution (as it is now written), the labor laws, the Influx Control Act, the Pass Law, and the Population Registration Act.

The United States has long intervened on behalf of the privileged white minority in South Africa, and in pursuit of its own economic and geo-political objectives. It must now redirect its heavy influence in the interests of justice and peace. Economic sanctions that are strictly implemented must be a part of a U.S. policy if we as a country wish to play a positive role at this time of crisis and change.

There are those who continue to argue that anti-communism requires us to continue U.S. support of the South African government. The American Friends Service Committee believes, however, that the vast majority of the American people can see that the issue is not communism; it is injustice. The sooner apartheid is abolished, the greater the chance that what follows will be a just, non-racial, participatory system of government.

As an organization based in the United States of America, the AFSC cannot address the issue of apartheid without acknowledging that racism has yet to be eliminated from our own society. We pray that the growing revulsion at apartheid in South Africa will rekindle a commitment to an equitable and just society in our own country.

The American Friends Service Committee has been working for freedom and justice in South Africa since 1957. Our staff and volunteers around the country take inspiration from the indomitable spirit of South African people at this time of crisis and recommit ourselves to work for a new U.S. policy that supports their just demands.