



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 December 1983

From The Minister of State

Des Starrs Esq
Southern Africa - The Imprisoned Society
c/o 13 Selous Street
LONDON NW1 ODW

Dear Mr Starrs,

Thank you for your letter of 2 December, addressed to Sir Geoffrey Howe, about Namibia.

I take note of your Committee's representations on behalf of those who you say are still held from the Kassinga raid of May 1978. We are, of course, concerned by detentions and other violations of human rights in Namibia as in the rest of Southern Africa.

I note also your reluctance to accept previous explanations that resolution of such problems must be dependent on a Namibia settlement. However, the fact is that the cycle of violence in the region will only be brought to an end when the Namibians have been able to choose their own leaders in free and fair elections and when relations between Angola and South Africa have improved. This is why we continue to seek to solve Namibia's problems at the root by working for an internationally recognised independence settlement on the basis of Security Council Resolution 435.

It is difficult for us to take up specific cases with the South African authorities, in the way you suggest, when we have no formal diplomatic or consular standing to do so and lack access to the full facts. I can however assure you that we have made clear to the South African authorities our attitude towards human rights abuses in Namibia. They can be in no doubt of our view. We deplore all human rights violations wherever they occur and whoever is responsible for them.

In your letter you have suggested that I might meet some of the sponsors of your organisation to discuss the question of human rights in Southern Africa more fully. You may be aware that a senior delegation from the Anti Apartheid Movement called on me today to discuss human rights issues in the Ciskei. In the circumstances, I hope you will agree that an early meeting of the kind you propose would be a duplication.

Yours sincerely
Malcolm Rifkin

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