



**FREE
NELSON**

MANDELA!

**SOLIDARITY WITH
SOUTH AFRICAN**

AND NAMIBIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS!

THE STRUGGLE IS MY LIFE

Nelson Mandela, born on 18 July at Umtata in the Transkei region of Eastern Cape, has spent the last **26 years** of his life in prison in South Africa. In 1943, he became a founding member of the African National Congress Youth League, and in the following years, together with Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and others, became a driving force in turning the ANC into a mass people's movement taking militant action against apartheid.

In 1952 he was the 'Volunteer in Chief' for the Defiance Campaign, a civil disobedience campaign which was the first stage of a mass counter-offensive against apartheid during the 1950s. It was followed by mass campaigns against Bantu Education and the Pass Laws. In 1955 the Freedom Charter — the blueprint for a democratic non-racial South Africa, was adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown. Though unable to be present at Kliptown, due to a banning order, Mandela was at the forefront of this activity, and in 1956 was one of the 156 people accused of Treason arising out of the adoption of the Freedom Charter.

On 21 March 1960, 69 people were shot dead at Sharpeville during a peaceful protest in the campaign against the Pass Laws. This action by the regime was quickly followed by the State of Emergency and the banning of the ANC and the breakaway PAC. These actions led Mandela and others within the leadership of the ANC to reconsider the policy of non-violence that the ANC had followed since its inception in 1912. After years of **'knocking in vain and modestly at a closed and barred door'** — in the words of Chief Luthuli, President of the ANC during the 1960s — the decision was taken to form an armed wing — Umkhonto we Sizwe, Spear of the Nation.

Mandela, now operating underground, surfaced in 1962 to visit heads of state in Africa and came to Europe to gain support for the liberation cause. Later that year he was arrested and sentenced to five years imprisonment for leaving the country without a passport and organising illegal strikes. Whilst in prison he was brought to trial as Accused No. 1 in the Rivonia Trial with other ANC leaders, and found guilty of planning acts of sabotage and making preparations for guerilla warfare against the apartheid state. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on 12 June 1964.

THE RIVONIA TRIALISTS

Initially ten were charged. One was discharged for lack of evidence and was acquitted. All the rest were sentenced to life imprisonment, which in South Africa is intended to be for the duration of natural life. Of those eight, two (**Govan Mbeki** and **Denis Goldberg**) have been released. The remainder are still in prison. Besides Mandela, they are:

Walter Sisulu born in 1912, he joined the ANC in 1940 and was elected Secretary-General in 1949. One of the 156 tried for treason in 1956 he was one of the key organisers of the struggle up to his arrest at Rivonia in July 1963.

Ahmed Kathrada born in 1930, he was politically active from an early age — at 16 he joined the Transvaal Passive Resistance Council and was imprisoned for passive resistance. He was one of the 156 acquitted in the marathon treason trial which began in 1956.

Andrew Mlangeni born in Johannesburg in 1926, he left school when he was very young to support his family and later became a member of the Regional Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Elias Motsoaledi born in 1925, an active trade unionist and ANC member. He was banned in 1950 and was arrested in 1963 after working for Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Raymond Mhlaba born in 1920, he joined the ANC in Port Elizabeth and was regional chairman from 1947-1953. He worked closely with the South African Congress of Trade Unions. Banned in 1955 he was arrested at Rivonia in 1963.

WINNIE MANDELA

Nomzamo Winnie Mandela was born in 1934 in the Eastern Cape and trained as a social worker after completing her secondary education. She and Nelson were married in 1958 in which year she was first detained for participating in an anti-pass demonstration. Nelson was imprisoned after only four years of marriage leaving her with the care of two young daughters.

Winnie's stature as a leader of the struggle in her own right has grown immensely. As a leading member of Soweto Black Parents Association she was detained for three months in 1976 and restricted to her home in Orlando. In 1977 she was banished to the remote town of Brandfort where she was restricted to her house between 6pm and 6am. Despite the firebombing of her house and continual harassment and surveillance she tirelessly immersed herself in community work in the area and continually defied her bans which were not lifted until July 1986. Her name with that of Nelson has been honoured throughout the world.

THE KEY TO FREEDOM

The freeing of Nelson Mandela is the key to freedom in South Africa. This is not only because of his pivotal role in the struggle over many years past. It is also because his freedom is inseparable from that of his people. Offered a conditional release in 1985 by P W Botha, Mandela replied in a message to a Soweto rally:

“Let (Botha) renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid. Let him unban the people’s organisation, the African National Congress. Let him free all who have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for their opposition to apartheid. Let him guarantee free political activity so that people may decide who will govern them.

I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom . . . I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.”

THE CAMPAIGN FOR MANDELA’S FREEDOM

In 1963, with the Rivonia trial raising the prospect of death sentences for the accused, the World Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners was formed in London, and it succeeded in saving Mandela and his colleagues from the threat of the death penalty. Since then, the campaign for the release of Mandela and all South African and Namibian political prisoners has spread throughout the world. Inside South Africa itself it took on a new lease of life after the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 brought freedom one step closer.

Today the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity, the Commonwealth, and the European Community are at one in calling for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela. Even Mrs Thatcher’s government has supported this demand.

Many institutions in Britain have honoured Mandela, but much remains to be done if the campaign for his freedom is to succeed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join the Campaign to Free Nelson Mandela Join the Anti-Apartheid Movement

The AAM has been at the forefront of the campaign to free Mandela and all apartheid’s political prisoners. Through membership you will receive regular information and campaign material about the struggle for freedom in Namibia and South Africa. Your support is vital.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Joint membership (2 people living at the same address)			£13.00
Individuals	£10.00	Pensioners/Unwaged	£4.50
Students	£6.50	School students	£4.50

NAME

ADDRESS

Amount: Membership £ Donation £ Total amount enclosed
Cheques etc should be made payable to the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

- I would like more information about the campaign to release Nelson Mandela and all apartheid’s political prisoners.
- I would like the Campaign Pack ‘Nelson Mandela – Freedom at 70’.

Anti-Apartheid Movement, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. 01-387 7966

