



AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

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Joint Communiqué of the African National Congress, Natal Indian Congress, the Transvaal Indian Congress, and members of the Indian community of South Africa

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The African National Congress (ANC) had talks with representatives of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and 52 other people from a wide cross-section of the Indian community of South Africa, from October 7th to 9th in Lusaka, Zambia. A further 40 people were to attend the talks, but were unable to do so because of transport difficulties.

The meeting was facilitated by the Indian High Commission in Zambia. This was one of the largest groups of people from within South Africa to have talks with the ANC. The ANC was represented by a large and very senior delegation of its national executive committee, led by Treasurer-General Thomas Nkobi. The NIC and TIC delegations were led by Jerry Coovadia and Cassim Saloojee respectively. Many senior members of the two congresses, and other influential leaders in the community, were unable to attend because of passport difficulties and other restrictions.

The participants from the wider Indian community comprised businessmen, cultural workers, professionals, religious leaders, teachers, trade unionists, welfare persons, sports people, women, youth, students and other sectors. The ANC was very pleased to meet such a large and extensive delegation from the Indian community.

Historically, the NIC and TIC and the broader Indian community have had a very close relationship with the ANC — and at present the ANC has high regard for the two Indian congresses. It views them as an integral part of the wider liberation movement, and believes firmly that the Indian community has a vitally important role to play in the struggle for a non-racial democratic South Africa.

The participants from the Indian community were moved by the warm reception given to them by the ANC, and they found the discussions highly stimulating and enlightening.

Among the major issues that emerged from the talks were:

1. Role of the ANC

The participants from the community were convinced that the ANC is indispensable to the process of seeking a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis which faces our country. They therefore called for the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations, the release from detention of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners, and the lifting of the state of emergency. They urged the government to begin negotiations with the ANC, to create a peaceful, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

2. Armed struggle

The ANC explained that, in view of the complete intransigence of the South African government and the persistence of state repression, it has no choice but to escalate the armed struggle. However, it remains firmly opposed to armed attacks on 'soft targets,' and regrets the loss of civilian lives in these attacks. Whereas those present believe in peaceful forms of resistance to apartheid, they expressed their understanding of the reasons why the ANC was obliged to take up arms.

3. The ANC and Communism

It was understood that the ANC is a national liberation movement that includes all classes and strata of the oppressed people and democratically-minded Whites. It is not a communist organisation. As a democratic organisation, it includes all people who are committed to the goals set out in the Freedom Charter. This means that it also has members who are Communist.

4. Post-Apartheid Economy

It was generally agreed that there is a need for economic and political liberation. The ANC seeks to eliminate social inequality based on race. It reaffirmed its commitment to the Freedom Charter and explained its support for a mixed economy, which will include state, co-operative and private sectors.

5. Sanctions and Disinvestment

It was noted that the ANC campaigns for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against apartheid South Africa.

It believes sanctions and disinvestment are important non-violent weapons in the struggle against apartheid and will serve to strengthen the capacity of the oppressed people to wage this struggle.

6. Cultural Boycott

The ANC supports the cultural boycott of South Africa. In discussions with the ANC it emerged that it is apartheid South Africa that has to be boycotted, and not the cultural expression of the oppressed people of South Africa. In this context, it was recognised that the cultural and religious needs of the Indian community might be affected by the boycott — and that there is a need for consultation with the democratic movement, so that the matter can be appropriately addressed.

7. Religion

The participants at the meeting were encouraged by the ANC's firm commitment to the fullest expression of freedom of religion. The participants from the Indian community agreed that all religions are fundamentally opposed to the apartheid system, and call upon the Indian community to give practical expression to this.

8. Education

The ANC and the participants from the Indian community are committed to a single, non-racial education system that will prepare people to play their full roles in a democratic and just South Africa.

9. October Municipal Elections

The ANC and participants from the Indian community are completely agreed that the October municipal elections are designed to perpetuate apartheid.

All present are firmly agreed that the Indian community is an integral part of the oppressed people of South Africa, and has a direct interest in the destruction of the apartheid system. They recognised the outstanding role played by the Indian community in the struggle for liberation in the past, and called on the community to reach even greater heights.

The Indian High Commissioner to Zambia reinforced these views. He strongly urged the Indian community to join with the African and other communities to eliminate apartheid. He explained that India was firmly opposed to apartheid and gave its fullest support to the ANC and the mass democratic movement. The participants from the Indian community and the ANC firmly committed themselves to effectively mobilising the Indian community in a struggle for a democratic, peaceful and non-racial South Africa.

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