



## **MANDELA: FREEDOM AT 70**

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**A major demand of the South African people is for the release of our leader, Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners. This year his 70th birthday on July 18 was marked by millions of people throughout the world showing solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa.**

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### **IN HIS OWN WORDS**

**On why he joined the ANC in 1944 (from court records of his 1962 trial for organising the 1961 general strike):**

"Its policy was one which appealed to my deepest inner convictions. It sought for the unity of all Africans, overriding tribal differences among them. It sought the acquisition of political power for Africans in the land of their birth. The ANC further believed that all people, irrespective of their colour, all people whose home is

South Africa and who believe in the principles of democracy and the equality of men, should be treated as Africans."

**On the choice to take up arms (from an address delivered in Addis Ababa in January 1962, two months after the founding of Umkhonto we Sizwe):**

"In all our campaigns we repeatedly stressed the importance of discipline, peaceful and non-violent struggle ... because we felt there were still opportunities for peaceful struggle and we did not want to expose our people to situations where they might become easy targets for the trigger-happy police of South Africa. But the situation has now radically altered. South Africa is now a land ruled by the gun. The Government is increasing the size of its army, navy, air force and police. Officers of the South African army have visited Algeria and Angola where they were briefed exclusively on methods of suppressing popular struggles. All opportunities for peaceful agitation have been closed".

**From No Easy Walk to Freedom on the government clampdown in 1953:**

"We had to analyse the dangers that faced us, formulate plans to overcome them and evolve new plans of political struggle. A political movement must keep in touch with reality and the prevailing conditions. Long speeches, the shaking of fists, the banging of tables, and strongly worded resolutions out of touch with conditions not bring about mass action, and can do a great deal of harm to the organisation and struggles we serve. We understood that the masses had to be made ready for the new forms of political struggle. We had to recuperate our strength and muster our forces for another and more powerful offensive against the enemy. To have gone ahead blindly as if nothing had happened, would have been suicidal and stupid. The conditions under which we meet today are, therefore, vastly different. The Defiance Campaign, together with its thrills and adventures, has receded. The old methods of bringing mass action through public mass meetings, press statements, and leaflets calling upon the people to go into action have become extremely dangerous and difficult to use effectively. The authorities will not easily permit a meeting called under the auspices of the ANC; few newspapers will publish statements openly criticising the policies of the Government, and there is hardly a single printing press which will agree to print

pamphlets calling upon workers to embark upon industrial action, for fear of prosecution under the Suppression of Communism Act and similar measures.

These developments require the evolution of new forms of political struggle which will make it possible for us to strive for action on a higher level than the Defiance Campaign. The Government, alarmed by the indomitable upsurge in national consciousness, is doing everything in its power to crush our movement by removing the genuine representatives of the people from the organisation."

**On defending trade unions from No Easy Walk to Freedom:**

"You must protect and defend your trade unions. If you are not allowed to have your meetings publicly, then you must hold them over your machines in the factories, on the trains and buses as you travel home. You must have them in your villages and shanty-towns. You must make every home and every shack and every mud structure where our people live a branch of the trade union movement, and you must never surrender."

**On friends and enemies from No Easy Walk to Freedom:**

"The friends of the people are distinguishable by the ready and disciplined manner in which they rally behind their organisations, and their readiness to sacrifice when the preservation of the organisation has become a matter of life and death. Similarly, enemies and shady characters are detected by the extent to which they consistently attempt to wreak the organisation by creating fratricidal strife, disseminating confusion, and undermining and even opposing important plans of action to vitalise the organisation".

**From Mandela's statement to the court on 20 April 1964 during the Rivonia trial:**

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against White domination, and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to

live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

**On renouncing Botha's offer of conditional release in 1985, read by Zinzi Mandela:**

## **YOUR FREEDOM AND MINE CANNOT BE SEPARATED 1985**

My father and his comrades wish to make this statement to you, the people, first. They are clear that they are accountable to you and to you alone. And that you should hear their views directly and not through others.

My father speaks not only for himself and for his comrades at Pollsmoor prison but he also speaks for all those in jail for their opposition to apartheid, for all those who are banished, for all those who are in exile, for all those who suffer under apartheid, for all those who are opponents of apartheid and for all those are oppressed and exploited.

My father says, "I am a member of the African National Congress. I have always been a member of the African National Congress and I will remain a member of the African National Congress until the day I die. Oliver Tambo is much more than a brother to me. He is my greatest friend and comrade for nearly fifty years. If there is any one among you who cherishes my freedom, Oliver Tambo cherishes it more, and I know that he would give his life to see me free. There is no difference between his views and mine."

My father says, "I am surprised at the conditions that the government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man. My colleagues and I wrote in 1952 to Malan asking for a round table conference to find a solution to the problems of our country but that was ignored.

"When Strijdom was in power, we made the same offer. Again it was ignored.

"When Verwoerd was in power we asked for a National Convention for all the people in South Africa to decide on their future. This, too, was in vain.

"It was only then when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us that we turned to armed struggle.



"Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd. Let him renounce violence. Let him say 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 the people may decide who will govern them.

"I cherish my own freedom dearly but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom. I owe to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers and to their fathers who have grieved and wept for them. Not only I have suffered during these long lonely wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free. I am in prison as the representative of the people and of your organisation, the African National Congress, which was banned. What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected?

"Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts. Herman Toivo Ja Toivo, when freed, never gave any undertaking, nor was he called upon to do so.

My father says, "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."

**NELSON  
MANDELA**



*Freedom at 70*