

AN OPEN LETTER TO NELSON MANDELA FROM EX-ANC DETAINEES

YMCA Shauri Moyo

P.O.Box 17073

Nairobi.

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Dear Cde Mandela
Revolutionary Greetings!

The news through the press about our horrific experiences at the hands of the ANC security organs must have left you in a state of bewilderment. Fully aware of that, we realise the need to write you this letter giving an account of our vicissitudes in combating the enemies of democracy within the ANC and putting across also our incessant efforts to have these problems resolved democratically with the full participation of the entire membership. By this we hope to dispel any misunderstandings regarding our decision to expose this disgraceful and shameful page in the history of our organisation, which we hold at high esteem, even at this hour.

First, it is a fact, undisputable indeed, that the 1984 mutiny was a spontaneous reaction of the overwhelming majority of the cadres of MK to crimes and misdeeds, incompatible with the noble and humane ideals of our political objectives, carried out by certain elements in the leadership of the ANC. These included, among other things, acts of torture and murder through beatings, committed by the ANC Security personnel under the leadership of Mzwandile Piliso; brutal suppression of democracy denying the membership of the ANC any opportunity, for a period exceeding thirteen years, to decide through democratic elections who should lead them; and misleading our people's army by locking it into diversional battles from which our struggle did not benefit, thereby weakening and destroying its fighting capacity.

Second, it remains our firm belief that, had the ANC leadership acted honestly at the very early stages of mutiny, and most of all, had President Tambo responded responsibly to our appeal for his immediate and direct intervention, many lives could have been saved. Regrettably, in a manner identical to our political enemy, the South African regime, the ANC leadership fished out the "ringleaders" and their most plainspoken opponents and unleashed virulent brutalities against them.

Third, having gone through close to five years without trial in the most notorious prison within the ANC, and having endured the humiliating, dehumanising and hazardous conditions in which some of us perished, we remained committed to the ANC. This was in recognition of the justness of our cause, in honour of men like you and the multitudes in our beleaguered

homeland who languished in racist dungeons and got murdered in this noble cause, and lest we forget our comrades whose lives were cut short by those who deceptively made noise and declarations about democracy on behalf of our people.

Fourth, embarrassed at the way the ANC community in Dakawa absolved us by electing us into the political structures in the Tanzanian ANC region, Chris Hani and Stanley Mabizela, acting on behalf of the National Executive Committee, then muzzled us by banning us from participating freely in ANC political life and dissolving democratically elected structures. Our efforts to challenge such an undemocratic action and to explain the causes of the 1984 mutiny for which we were being unjustifiably treated were answered by shouts from Hani himself, taking us down [from] the platform and even calling for armed Tanzanian Task Force Unit to surround the hall.

It's the realization of the last-named factor that sealed and shattered our long-standing commitments and hopes to reform the ANC from within, and we resigned in December last year. But let it be stressed still, that even at that time, we still limited our activities to consulting the internal leadership of our movement[,] avoiding embarrassing the organisation we so dearly loved. We contacted through letters and attempted to send our document (captured at the Dar-es-Salaam Airport by ANC and Tanzanian security) to such stalwarts of our anti-apartheid struggle as Frank Chikane, General Secretary of SACC, leadership from prison and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Knowing you as a personality who distinguished himself by unflinchingly fighting and standing for human rights and ideals of highest democracy, we receive with bitterness your praises showered at these corrupt and atrocious elements, whilst a shroud of secrecy wraps around the noblest sons and daughters of South Africa who perished in pursuit of the same ideals as yours[,] at the hands of these fake custodians of our people's political aspirations. It is this that pricks our conscience to remove this shroud. Nothing can be more treacherous than to allow such crimes to go unchallenged and unknown. Nothing can be more hypocritical when some of us even at this hour are languishing in those concentration camps. Even much more disturbing is that these enemies of democracy are to be part of that noble delegation of the ANC to negotiate the centuries-long denied democratic freedoms of our people. What a mockery! What a scorn to our people's sacrifices for freedom! We back your tireless efforts and of all those peace-loving South Africans who see the need for a peaceful settlement of our problems, but we also believe that our people's yearnings for justice can only be competently secured by a morally clean leadership.

We know how difficult it is to accept these bitter but objective truths, and how mammoth the task is of taking appropriate actions against these individuals. But we know also how [undermined ?] they are even within the ANC membership, and we are certain also that, if only they could talk, much more horrific stories will come out of those who tasted the bitterness of the ANC security's treatment. Hence, our sincere call to you and the fighting

masses in South Africa and within the ANC to back our demand for a commission to inquire into these atrocities. This, *contrary to short-sighted ideas*, will not weaken the ANC, but will demonstrate to our people and the world the ANC's uncompromising commitment to justice and democracy. No better guarantee can be made to our people that when our organisation ascends to power, their rights and freedoms will thrive in competent and responsible hands.

*Amandla!! NGAWETHU!!
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!!
Yours in the Struggle,
Ex-ANC Detainees*

(Copy from fax-message)