

Mandela Taken From Her Home In South Africa

By ALAN COWELL, Special to The New York Times

December 22, 1985

SOWETO, South Africa, Dec. 21 — Armed white policemen forcibly removed Winnie Mandela, the South African black activist, from her home in this segregated township today after she refused to accept renewed and relaxed restrictions on her movements, family friends and lawyers said.

Several hours after Mrs. Mandela, the wife of the imprisoned leader of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela, was driven from her small home in Soweto by the police, her lawyers said her whereabouts were unknown. According to the lawyers, the police said she was to be taken to an airport hotel.

Witnesses said Mrs. Mandela had refused to check in at the hotel. Friends said later she had called to tell them where she was, but they did not disclose the location.

In Durban, meanwhile, eight people, including two white children, were wounded when an assailant threw an explosive at a van while the children were waiting for their parents in a crowded street. One of the wounded, a white passer-by, was said by the police to be in critical condition.

The South African Press Association quoted an unidentified witness as saying a black youth had thrown a grenade at the vehicle. But the police said a limpet mine was thrown under the van by an unidentified assailant.

The attack seemed to be a further effort by anti-government operatives to strike at what are known as "soft" white targets. Last Sunday, six whites were killed when their truck hit a land mine near Messina in the northern part of the country close to the Limpopo River frontier with Zimbabwe.

The outlawed African National Congress took responsibility for the land-mine attack.

In Soweto, relatives at Mrs. Mandela's home said the police arrived at about 2 P.M. to deliver documents relaxing an eight-year-old official order that banishes her to a segregated black township outside the remote Orange Free State town of Brandfort.

A lawyer present when Mrs. Mandela was seized said she had refused to accept any documents from them and there had been an argument.

“She refused to leave,” the lawyer said. Mrs. Mandela had been treated in a clinic for high blood pressure earlier this month, the lawyer said, and her personal physician, present during the confrontation, had advised against her being moved.

“They wanted Mrs. Mandela to accompany them of her own free will,” the lawyer said of the police.

Two uniformed policemen, the lawyer said, “then went in and grabbed Mrs. Mandela, each of them taking an arm, and dragged her out of the house.”

Under South African law, Mrs. Mandela is what is called a banned person. She may not be quoted inside South Africa, and her movements are restricted. Under a 1977 ban, she was consigned to Brandfort, ordered to remain at her home in the township during certain hours and prohibited from meeting with more than one other person at a time, other than family members.

In a statement today, Louis Le Grange, Minister of Law and Order, said he had decided to ease the restrictions so Mrs. Mandela could attend social gatherings, leave Brandfort and not be obliged to report to police stations.

But Mr. Le Grange said she was still barred from living in Soweto — which, she has told friends, she considers to be her home — and would not be permitted to attend political meetings, be quoted, enter “educational institutions,” distribute publications or join political movements.

Mrs. Mandela left her home in Brandfort after it was damaged by a gasoline bomb in August and has not returned there since.

Since then, she has increasingly defied the terms of her ban. Earlier this month, she addressed a political rally for the first time, she said, in 25 years.

Western analysts said that the authorities are seeking a formula to release Mr. Mandela in a manner that defuses what many believe to be a huge political following among South Africa’s 23 million blacks. Relaxing the terms of Mrs. Mandela’s banishment may have been designed, the analysts said, to counter international criticism of South Africa, particularly by creditor banks.

But segments of the white minority have demanded that the authorities not be seen as knuckling under to the defiance of such figures as Mrs. Mandela.

According to friends and lawyers, Mrs. Mandela decided that accepting the relaxed restrictions would have given her enemies a victory, and she refused to take action that might have been interpreted as collaboration with them.

The manner in which Mrs. Mandela was taken from her home, the analysts said, seemed certain to negate the perceived image-building benefits of relaxing her ban, and

the bomb attack in Durban will stiffen white hostility to overtures to the black majority in general and the African National Congress in particular.

The events thus seemed to deepen the sense of crisis in South Africa, where a state of emergency decree has been in force in some districts, including the country's main industrial centers, since July 21. More than 1,000 people have died in political violence in South Africa over the last 15 months.