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LETTER DATED 5 APRIL 1979 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF THE  
PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In recent days the South African Government has received appeals for clemency in the case of Mr. Solomon Mahlangu. At the request of the African Group at the United Nations the Security Council has today once again been called into session to concern itself with matters which fall within the exclusive domestic jurisdiction of South Africa.

For the benefit of Your Excellency and others who have expressed an interest in this case, I should like to furnish the following background information on Mr. Mahlangu and on the events which lead to his conviction for murder and subsequent sentence.

Mr. Mahlangu left South Africa and received military training and training in the use of explosives in Angola. During June 1977 he returned to South Africa together with Mr. Mandy Motloug and another accomplice. They brought with them arms, ammunition and explosives. Armed with three loaded submachine-guns and handgrenades they entered Johannesburg on 13 June 1977. They aroused the suspicion of a taxi driver who indicated that he wished to see what was in their luggage, whereupon they fled in different directions. Whilst running Messrs. Mahlangu and Motloug fired several shots at a number of men who were pursuing them and at uninvolved bystanders. They entered a building and encountered four men who were drinking their morning tea in an office. Without warning, shots were fired at the four men and two of these innocent persons were killed and one wounded due to their unfortunate encounter with Mr. Mahlangu and his companion. It was later reported that Mr. Mahlangu's firearm was found to be jammed when he was arrested.

Mr. Mahlangu was subsequently tried and convicted on, inter alia, two counts of murder and two counts of attempted murder. The court could find no extenuating circumstances. Under South African criminal law, in common with the law in most other countries, an accomplice to a crime, such as murder, is guilty of the crime itself.

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Mr. Mahlangu was, therefore, found guilty of a criminal offence and was not convicted on political grounds.

I would appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) J. Adriaan EKSTEEM  
Chargé d'Affaires

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