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LETTER DATED 19 AUGUST 1985 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to forward herewith the text of an appeal made by  
Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India on 19 August 1985 for the release of  
Mr. Nelson Mandela and to request that this be circulated as a document of the  
Security Council.

(Signed) N. KRISHNAN  
Ambassador/Permanent Representative  
of India to the United Nations

Annex

Appeal made by Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India,  
on 19 August 1985, for the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela

The recent escalation of violence in South Africa is a matter of profound concern to the international community. Hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent lives have been lost, the poor majority black population has been further impoverished, the denial of human rights or any kind of freedom has been further accentuated by the imposition of a state of Emergency in several districts inhabited by black people. All this is the direct result of the policy of apartheid practised by the racist South African régime.

Violence is implicit in the theory and practice of racial bigotry, which is the essence of apartheid. To struggle against this tyranny is the natural and just response of the oppressed people of South Africa, it is our common cause. The man who personifies this struggle and its sufferings is Nelson Mandela, who has now been in solitary confinement for 23 years in a notorious prison in South Africa. It is astonishing that the South African Government expected this idealist to accept a number of humiliating conditions as the price for his release. They perhaps thought that after all these years of incarceration his spirit would be broken and he would settle for his personal "freedom" at the cost of his life-long ideals. His answer to the offer of a conditional release made by the Government in February this year is a moving testimony to his indomitable will. His reply, read out by his daughter at a rally, was: "I am in prison as a representative of the people and your organisation, the African National Congress, which was banned. What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned? I cherish my own freedom dearly but I care even more for your freedom from apartheid. I cannot sell my birthright nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of my people to be free".

South Africa must be made to see reason. It must be made to release Nelson Mandela unconditionally. The only way this can be done is to isolate the racists totally. It is futile to hope that co-operation in any manner with that régime will give anyone leverage or influence, so as to change things for the better.

I, therefore, earnestly appeal to all Governments to secure the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and his colleagues and to sever all contacts with the racist régime in Pretoria.

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