

Speech delivered by Nelson Mandela at the ANC Rally held at the Lenasia Cricket Stadium on 18 November 1990

Comrades and Friends

I am indeed happy to be in Lenasia today. I spoke recently at *The Indicator's* Human Rights Award ceremony, only to realise that many of you were not in position to attend such a meeting. The Lenz ANC Branch, therefore, requested that I meet with ANC members here, as well as with the people of Lenasia and Ennerdale.



I am pleased that this could be arranged so quickly, and I am especially grateful for the honour that you have bestowed on me. I am sure that you would shower a similar welcome to the President of the ANC, Comrade Oliver Tambo, when he returns to our beloved land on the 14 December this year.

Lenasia, 28 years ago, was nothing more than a barren piece of land with an army barracks converted into homes for those who were uprooted by the inhuman Group Areas Act. Ennerdale and Daxina did not even exist.

The sense of community solidarity that many of you had experienced in non-racial areas such as Sophiatown and Doornfontein was shattered by foolish Verwoerdian laws. Mahatma Gandhi's settlement, Tolstoy Farm, stood as a lonely symbol of our people's fight against injustice and oppression.

But I am proud that from the inhumanity of apartheid has emerged communities with beautiful homes and gardens, and colourful churches, temples and mosques. It shows that the spirit of our people has not been broken by the cruelty of apartheid. It shows that you have developed an iron-like determination to destroy apartheid and to create a new society.

There are many examples of your courage and strength. In prison we were proud to read about the massive rejection of the Tri-cameral system by this community in August 1984. Only last year a young girl of twelve from Lenasia was arrested in

Pretoria during the women's march against repression. And there were the tragic deaths of Yusuf Akhalwaya and Prakash Napier, soldiers of our people's army Umkhonto We Sizwe.



Even as I admire your courage, I was deeply saddened when I walked through the Homeless Camp in Extension 9 this morning. Once again, I was reminded of the harshness of life under apartheid. I was, however, comforted by the fact that many of you have accepted the homeless people as your neighbours, that you share water and other facilities with them, and that your schools are willing to accept the little children. In so doing you are acting in the true tradition of the ANC and laying a sound foundation for a non-racial future in this community.

Comrades and Friends

We in the ANC are aware that you are concerned about the future. The initial excitement that followed our un-banning and the release of some political prisoners has settled. You have had an opportunity to reflect on political developments more soberly.

I know many of you have pondered over the violence, the weakening economy, the militancy of our youth and many other problems. You want to know whether things will change for the better. Let me say that there is nothing unusual or wrong about expressing such concerns.

The violence in Natal and on the Reef in the last few months has shaken me as well. The merciless killing of civilians on trains and in city centres during peak hours is against my nature, and against the policies of the ANC itself. I say this

even though the ANC has employed the armed struggle as a political instrument in our quest for justice and peace.

Many people have asked me what is happening. Some say that it is a Zulu-Xhosa conflict. Others claim that it is an Inkatha-ANC power struggle. The government refers to it as a case of “black on black violence”. We believe that such pronouncements hide the truth behind these painful events. In fact, they present a distorted picture of reality, and are aimed at discrediting the ANC.

At the outset let me state that the ANC is committed to a peacefully negotiated settlement in our country. It was the ANC that had initiated the peace process in this country. It was the ANC that had drafted the Harare Declaration, which spelt out the phases of the peace process. It was we who wrote to Mr. P.W. Botha and Mr. De Klerk suggesting that we set aside our real differences for the moment and address the civil war in our country. It is we who have suspended the armed struggle. Be clear about this!

But our adversary - the South African government - has not done the same. The South African Police, the South African Defence Force and its secret services, the Security Police and its agents such as the Askaris and the hit squads are all fully armed. They continue to maim and shoot at our people. They detain and arrest our activists and soldiers with ease and without fear.

But more than that, the security forces have unleashed a systematic, orchestrated and carefully designed plan of violence and terror to confuse our people and destabilise the ANC. The cruel and ransom killings are not something new. We have witnessed it against SWAPO in Namibia, in UNITA operations against the Angolan government, and through RENAMO in Mozambique. It is common knowledge that these bandit forces were trained and financed by the South African security forces.

That is why I say, without fear of contradiction, that these are the real people who are behind the violence in our townships. They are using and hiding behind organisations and groups espousing narrow tribalistic nationalism, thereby creating the false impression that this is conflict between rival tribal factions.

The ANC is convinced of the need for a national peace strategy. We are, therefore, in the process of planning a national peace conference of the broadest spectrum of anti-apartheid forces in our country. It is hoped that such a gathering could arrive at a common understanding of the root causes of the violence and develop a national strategy for the road to peace in our beloved land.

The National Party has got a double-agenda for the negotiations process. On the one hand, they talk about reform and change; on the other, they still want to hold

onto economic and political power. We have experienced this difficulty during the talks that we've had with the government.

The ANC has expressed a clear commitment to a peaceful settlement in our country by suspending the armed struggle. In return our people get Operation Iron Fist. Our children are shot in the streets. Our soldiers are still in exile. Our members are still languishing in prison. And they demand huge amounts as bail for our detained commanders and activists.

As if that is not enough, large communities and townships have had their electricity supply disconnected. Our people are being deprived of water. And when neighbouring Indian communities have come to their assistance in human compassion, police have destroyed their water buckets and split their cans.

I want to say to the government that our people's patience has been tested for too long. We are a forgiving people, but we are not slaves. We desire peace and friendship, but not on our knees!

Comrades and Friends

The ANC is a mass democratic organisation. It is not dictated to by the National Party. The government cannot instruct us as to how we should conduct the affairs of our struggle. What is at stake is apartheid, and not the tactics that the ANC employs in the struggle against apartheid.

And as long as apartheid exists, we fight on! My call to you is to intensify the struggle. Use every means possible, depending on the actual conditions obtaining in your community, to fight against white domination, oppression and exploitation. Boycotts, stayaways, strikes, civil disobedience, marches and meetings are all legitimate, peaceful means of struggle.

Allow me to remind you that we have only suspended the armed struggle and not abandoned mass struggles altogether. In this context I want to make specific mention of the individuals serving in House of Delegates, the House of Representatives and the local Management Committees. Apartheid's days are numbered. Turn your backs once and for all from the apartheid system so that you can look at your people in the eye. Join the ranks of the ANC. It is not as difficult as it seems. Others in the Bantustans, in Transkei, Venda and Ciskei are cooperating with us and stand to regain the respect of the people.

There is one more issue I wish to deal with before we sing Nkosi Sikelele i Afrika. We are given the news that the National Party has finally decided that it wants to open its doors to all South Africans. Some among us will be tempted to join forces with a new-look National Party. Others in this community might be thinking about it too or might be contemplating forming an alliance with the Afrikaners.

The ANC welcomes any decision by the National Party that moves away from racism. But we are certain that Afrikaners in the NP are not going to allow for full and equal participation of Blacks within its ranks.

We must never forget that it was the sheer force of circumstances, the power of our resistance and international campaigns against apartheid South Afrika that has pressurised the National Party to change its political course. They are, after all, unwilling reformers!

The National Party is still dominated and influenced by the secret, all-Afrikaner Broerderbond. For some time now the NP has opened its doors to English speaking Whites. Yet in its forty-two years in power, it has only allowed four English-speaking Whites to serve as Cabinet Ministers. So, you really believe that Blacks would be able to play a central role at all levels in the National Party? We doubt it!

I want to ask you something: How would the National Party respond if one million Blacks applied to become members of the NP? Would they grant full membership to these applicants? Would they accept a Black-dominated party leadership? Would they be willing to shift their Party headquarters to Soweto? It is when you get to the practical reality that you understand the difference between what they say and what they actually do.

Those who are eager to join the NP will learn this sooner than later. They would probably have an “own affairs” for Whites, and an “eie sake” section for Blacks in the NP. They would have to apply the jargon of group rights and minority rights within the party itself. In classic Tri-cameral style, for every 5 white NP leaders, they will have two Coloureds and one Indian. And so-called African leaders, well at this stage we don’t know where they would fit in.

It is precisely for these reasons that the ANC had responded cautiously to the government's moves since February 2 this year. We realise that one or two dramatic announcements by the government can be important, but on their own, they cannot alter the course of history altogether. Peace in our land cannot be built on the rhetoric of reform. It can only be built on the democratisation and re-ordering of society. This basic truth the National Party and its security establishment has not understood.

In contrast, the ANC has a tested commitment to a non-racial democracy based on equal rights for every single individual irrespective of race, religion or sex. We guarantee religious freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of association and movement. We guarantee your right to language and culture, provided that these do not promote racism and racial hostility. We fully support the call for a Bill of Rights to be entrenched in a new constitution. We call for a mixed economy,

which aim to promote economic growth as well as the needs of the oppressed and exploited in our land.

Our organisation is open to all South Africans. We have the proud record of having in our ranks Africans, Indians, Coloureds, Whites, communists and non-communists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and even atheists. And we are proud of this diversity.

With all its imperfections and problems, the ANC is a living embodiment of a new South Africa. This is the organisation I call on you to join! The ANC is the future! Amandla!