

African National Congress

Office of the President

MESSAGE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH BY COMRADE
OLIVER REGINALD TAMBO, PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN
NATIONAL CONGRESS AND HONORARY PRESIDENT OF THE
ANC YOUTH LEAGUE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 15TH
ANNIVERSARY OF JUNE 16TH

June 16th is a very special day in the hearts and minds of all South African patriots. It is the day we salute the youth of our country for their courage, their bravery and their sacrifices. It is the day that we remember, whether we be parents, grandparents, brothers or sisters, all those who made the ultimate sacrifice when they laid down their lives in order that the evil of apartheid be destroyed in the land of our birth. For those young people who were robbed of their lives by the brutal repression of the apartheid system before even reaching adulthood, we owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

June 16th, 1976, was a turning point in the history of our country. The students of Soweto took to the streets to demand the end of the inferior system of Bantu education. Their protest action ignited a nationwide uprising against apartheid and created a crisis for the Pretoria regime from which it has been unable to escape. It was upon the basis of the mass action of the youth of our country in 1976 that the mass democratic movement grew to become a decisive pillar of our struggle in the 1980s. The Soweto uprising was also a turning point for our people's army, Umkhonto We Sizwe, which from that period on proved capable of striking ever more effective blows against the apartheid system. Moreover the courage and sacrifices of the youth inspired millions of people across the world to join us in demanding the isolation of apartheid South Africa and in supporting our struggle.

Today, we are witnessing the first fruits of the sacrifices of our youth. Our Movement is unbanned and the ANC Youth League is able to organise openly amongst the young people of our country. Some of our political prisoners have been released and some of our exiles have been able to return home. The prospect of a political settlement is before us.

This day however must be a day upon which the youth re-dedicate themselves to the struggle. But this cannot be merely a re-dedication to the anti-apartheid struggle. We must also be

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committing ourselves to the struggle to transform our whole country into a genuinely united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society.

The youth have a very heavy responsibility on their shoulders. The youth must be at the centre of the mass action which we must mobilise to ensure the removal of all obstacles to negotiations. We must demand the release of all political prisoners and the end to political trials. We must demand the right of return for all exiles. We must demand the scrapping of all repressive security legislation.

The youth have a duty to do all in their power to end the violence which is causing so much suffering to our people. This violence is aimed at weakening if not destroying our Movement. It is putting the entire "peace process" at risk. The ANC must speak with one united voice in demanding that the De Klerk regime takes the steps which we have called for in order to end the violence.

We must also be disciplined, refrain from being deliberately provoked, and exhibit the maximum possible tolerance towards those with whom we have political disagreements.

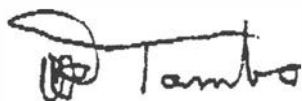
The regime

It must end the repression and violence so that a climate exists in which a genuine process of negotiations can take place. This requires an elected Constituent Assembly which can draw up and adopt a new democratic Constitution and an Interim Government to rule South Africa during the process of transition.

You, the youth of South Africa, must look to the future because it is your future. You have the responsibility to make a reality of the vision of a new South Africa which is enshrined in the Freedom Charter we adopted in 1955. You must be in a position to equip yourselves to accept this responsibility.

In your schools, at work, on the land, in the colleges and universities, you must be striving now to make the vision of a non-racial society come true. This will involve struggle, sacrifice and hard work. We must do away with inferior education, youth unemployment, poor housing and all the other injustices of the past. We must campaign with imagination and determination for the new South Africa for which so many have sacrificed and struggled.

I take this opportunity of sending a special message of greetings to the ANC Youth League. Your re-birth must give rise to the same momentum of struggle as our generation were able to achieve with the creation of the Youth League in the 1940s. You must be an example to the entire youth of the country. You must act with clarity of purpose, absolute determination and total discipline. I call upon the youth of our country to stand firm with the African National Congress at this crucial but decisive stage of the struggle. Through united mass action we will destroy apartheid and create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa.



O. R. T a m b o

