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PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE

10 DOWNING STREET

SERIAL No. T.177/85

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 October 1985

Dear Mr. President,

I know the great importance which you and your Government attach to the discussion of Southern African issues at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Nassau next week. I want to let you know in advance what my general approach will be.

I have always felt a deep abhorrence of the system of apartheid in South Africa as being utterly contrary to all British values and British ideals. I have made this plain to President Botha in strong terms. Britain is united with the Commonwealth in seeking an end to apartheid and its replacement by a system of government which commands the support of the people of South Africa as a whole.

I hope that in Nassau we can discuss practical ways in which each of our countries can help to promote the fundamental reforms which we all want to see in South Africa. Our aim should be to help create the political conditions and mechanisms for a dialogue between the Government and the black community on the latter's participation in the political process.

Each of us must choose those means which are most appropriate to our particular circumstances and policies in contributing to this common end. As you know, Britain has recently joined with its European partners in endorsing a

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number of restrictive and positive measures in relation to South Africa reinforcing those which we have been implementing for a number of years. We have no military co-operation, no arms trade, no collaboration for nuclear development, no exports of crude oil and licensing controls on the export of sensitive equipment. Frankly I doubt whether any country is doing more. Our measures give an unmistakable political signal to the South African Government of our determination to see change.

But they are not intended to damage the South African economy. I remain firmly opposed to economic sanctions because I do not believe that they would persuade the South African Government to implement the changes we all wish to see. On the contrary, I fear that they would play into the hands of the extremists and harden resistance to change at the very moment when it seems at last to be getting under way. Moreover by undermining prosperity in South Africa they would only harm those whom we should be trying to help.

As I see it, our most pressing task is to help bring about negotiations between the South African Government and representatives of the black population. I hope that in Nassau we can have a realistic and open-minded discussion on the scope for positive action by the Commonwealth to promote this.

I look forward to discussing these vital issues with your delegation.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency President Ibrahim Babangida