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THE PRIME MINISTER

9 February 1988

Dear Nicholas,

Thank you for your letter of 22 January about Nelson Mandela.

The humanitarian and the political case for Mr. Mandela's release is compelling. I believe, like you, that his release would represent a key step towards creating a climate of confidence in which dialogue across the racial divide on South Africa's future would become possible.

This has long been my view, and we have frequently urged the South African Government to release Mr. Mandela. We continue to raise his case with the South African Government in bilateral exchanges, and have joined the Commonwealth and our European partners in pressing for his release.

I would be ready to raise the matter direct with President Botha if I were to visit South Africa. But I should not wish to make such a visit unless I was sure that it would contribute to the ending of apartheid. That is not the case at present.

I hope that the South African Government will soon come to accept that if the peaceful national dialogue which we all want to see is to take place, Mr. Mandela and other political

prisoners will have to be released. We, for our part, will continue to argue the case for this with the South African Government.

Y
ours ever
Raymond

The Lord Bethell