

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PS
 PS/MR RIFKIND
 PS/PUS
 MR FERGUSSON
 SIR J FREELAND
 MR JOHNSON
 MR O'NEILL
 HD/SAFD
 HD/CAFD
 HD/UND
 HD/NEWS DEPT
 RESIDENT CLERK

MR CLG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

PS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET



15.11.84

CONFIDENTIAL

FM PRETORIA

TO DESKBY 011700Z FCO

TELNO 454

OF 011600Z NOVEMBER 85

INFO ROUTINE JOHANNESBURG

INFO SAYING DURBAN, CAPE TOWN (CONSULATE)

GRIFFITHS' TELELETTER OF 30 OCTOBER: RESTRICTIONS ON PRESS FREEDOM

SUMMARY

1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAVE DECIDED TO PLACE FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL CONSTRAINTS ON PRESS ACTIVITY. THIS WILL IN PARTICULAR PRECLUDE TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE UNREST. THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION MAY CALL FOR SUPPORT IN REPRESENTATIONS AGAINST THE BAN.

DETAIL

2. THE STATE PRESIDENT IN A SPEECH TO THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION LAST NIGHT (31 OCT) DENOUNCED THE FOREIGN PRESS AS IRRESPONSIBLE, AND REPEATED EARLIER CHARGES THAT SOME JOURNALISTS 'SET UP' UNREST INCIDENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FILMING THEM. HE SAID THAT THE ASSOCIATION WOULD BE INFORMED OF GOVERNMENT DECISIONS ON PRESS FREEDOM SOON.
3. DEPUTY INFORMATION MINISTER, LOUIS NEL, MET TODAY WITH THE BOARD OF THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION. HE INFORMED THEM THAT A GOVERNMENT DECREE WOULD BE ISSUED EITHER LATE TONIGHT OR EARLY TOMORROW WHICH WOULD ANNOUNCE NEW RESTRICTIONS ON PRESS ACCESS TO THOSE MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS COVERED BY EMERGENCY POWERS. THESE RESTRICTIONS WOULD, IN PARTICULAR, RESTRAIN THE ACCESS OF TELEVISION CREWS.
4. MR NEL TOLD THE ASSOCIATION THAT THE DECREE, WHICH WOULD BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY IF IT HAD BEEN ISSUED, WOULD LIMIT PRESS OPERATIONS IN 'EMERGENCY' DISTRICTS. NO TELEVISION OR RADIO NEWS COVERAGE OF ANY UNREST INCIDENT IN THESE DISTRICTS WOULD BE PERMITTED EXCEPT WITH THE EXPRESS PERMISSION OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER. IT WOULD BE AN OFFENCE FOR TELEVISION OR RADIO JOURNALISTS TO BE IN THESE DISTRICTS WHEN UNREST WAS OCCURRING. IT WOULD ALSO BE AN OFFENCE FOR ANY FILM MADE OF SUCH UNREST INCIDENTS TO BE TRANSMITTED.
5. THE PROVISIONS WILL APPLY EQUALLY TO FOREIGN AND LOCAL PRESS. MR NEL IMPLIED THAT IN THE CABINET DEBATE ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION OF THESE MEASURES, MANY HAD PRESSED FOR CONSIDERABLY TOUGHER RESTRICTIONS. THE EVENTUAL PACKAGE WAS PROBABLY THE MOST 'LIB-

OF THESE MEASURES, MANY HAD PRESSED FOR CONSIDERABLY TOUGHER RESTRICTIONS. THE EVENTUAL PACKAGE WAS PROBABLY THE MOST 'LIBERAL' POSSIBLE.

6. MR NEL ADDED THAT, SEPARATE TO THE DECREE'S PROVISION, EXISTING EMERGENCY POWERS WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO ENSURE THAT NO OTHER JOURNALISTS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO ENTER OR REPORT ON UNREST INCIDENTS IN EMERGENCY AREAS UNLESS UNDER POLICE ESCORT. SEVERE PENALTIES WILL BE IMPOSED IF THE PROVISIONS ARE NOT COMPLIED WITH.

7. MR NEL ADDED THAT IN THOSE CASES WHERE THE WORK PERMITS OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS HAD NOT BEEN RENEWED AFTER EXPIRY, THE CORRESPONDENTS SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK UNTIL A FINAL DECISION HAD BEEN REACHED UPON THE RENEWAL. A DECISION ON OUTSTANDING APPLICATIONS COULD BE EXPECTED NEXT WEEK. THIS WAS TAKEN BY THE ASSOCIATION AS AN OMINOUS CHANGE IN OFFICIAL POLICY. HITHERTO DELAYS IN RENEWAL HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS, RATHER THAN A REVIEW OF THE MERITS OF THE APPLICATION.

8. IN EXPLAINING THE OPERATION OF THE NEW LAWS, MR NEL SAID THAT IF JOURNALISTS WERE COVERING A PEACEFUL INCIDENT IN AN EMERGENCY AREA, EG A FUNERAL, WHICH TURNED VIOLENT, THEY WOULD HENCEFORTH BE OBLIGED, IF TELEVISION OR RADIO JOURNALISTS, TO STOP FILMING OR RECORDING AND IMMEDIATELY LEAVE THE AREA, AND, IF PRINT JOURNALISTS, TO TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO FIND A POLICE ESCORT. THE ASSOCIATION CONSIDERED THIS TO PRESENT THEM WITH CONSIDERABLE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES.

9. THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION INTEND CALLING A FULL MEETING OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP TOMORROW MORNING. THEY EXPECT, AT THE LEAST, TO ISSUE A STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT DECISION AND IT IS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL CALL ON THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO INTERVENE.

COMMENT

10. THE NEW RESTRICTIONS ARE A 'SUBSTANTIAL' CURB ON PRESS OPERATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA. THEY ARE AIMED AT ENDING TELEVISION COVERAGE OF EVENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA. SOUTH AFRICAN TELEVISION ALREADY PRACTICES EFFECTIVE SELF-CENSORSHIP, REPORTING LITTLE OF THE VIOLENCE. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT FIRMLY BELIEVE, AND HAVE STATED, THAT FOREIGN PRESS COVERAGE IS A 'CATALYST TO VIOLENCE', AND INDEED TAKES AN ACTIVE ROLE IN INSPIRING VIOLENCE, THOUGH IT HAS REFUSED TO RESPOND TO CALLS FROM THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION THAT IT PRESS CHARGES AGAINST THOSE IT CLAIMS TO BE GUILTY OF SUCH BEHAVIOUR.

11. WE EXPECT TO BE PRESSED TO COMMENT ON THE NEW MEASURES AND TO SAY WHAT WE SHALL DO TO SUPPORT THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. SUBJECT TO YOUR VIEWS WE THINK THAT WE SHOULD EXPRESS CONCERN TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ABOUT WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE WORK PERMITS OF BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS. YOU MAY WISH US TO POINT TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF REPERCUSSIONS IF PERMITS ARE NOT RENEWED.

12. IN ADDITION WE SHALL NEED GUIDANCE ON WHAT ACTION WE SHOULD TAKE MORE GENERALLY ON THE QUESTION OF RESTRICTIONS ON PRESS FREEDOM AND WHAT WE SHOULD SAY IN PUBLIC ABOUT BRITISH REACTIONS TO THE NEW STEPS. THE PRESS RECOGNISE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAVE CLEARLY DECIDED THAT IT IS WORTH INCURRING INTERNATIONAL OPPOBRIUM FOR THE SAKE OF REMOVING TOWNSHIP VIOLENCE FROM FOREIGN TELEVISION SCREENS. BUT THEY DO NOT EXPECT THAT THIS WILL DETER FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS FROM EXPRESSING DISAPPROVAL OF THE NEW MEASURES.

13. WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH OTHER MISSIONS WHOM WE UNDERSTAND ARE ALSO SEEKING INSTRUCTIONS. OUR US COLLEAGUES ANTICIPATE THAT THEY WILL BE AUTHORISED TO TAKE A VERY CRITICAL POSITION ON THE NEW MEASURES. DEPENDING ON THEIR INSTRUCTIONS THEY MAY WISH TO PROPOSE SOME SORT OF JOINT DEMARCHE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHORITIES. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOUR INSTRUCTIONS COULD INCLUDE GUIDANCE ON WHETHER WE SHOULD GO ALONG WITH ANY PROPOSALS FOR SUCH A DEMARCHE.

MOBERLY