

Apartheid - 1985

Issue

Apartheid: an official government policy of strict racial segregation in the Republic of South Africa that promulgates grave violations of human rights and dignity. It has been imposed by the government which represents a white minority population of some 5,000,000 (27%) against a black majority population of more than 22,000,000 (73%). Apartheid also restricts and denies full rights to persons of mixed or other races including those designated as colored or Asian.

Background

The Dutch East India Company landed the first white settlers on the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. By the end of the 1700's they numbered only an approximate 15,000. Speaking a dialect named Afrikaans, they were known as Boers or Afrikaners.

At the end of the Napoleonic wars Britain took possession and brought in 5,000 new settlers. The Anglicization of government and the freeing of slaves led to a trek north into tribal lands by some twelve thousand Afrikaners. They established there the Republic of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Later in the 19th Century the discovery of diamonds and then gold led to added immigration. On October 11, 1899 war between Britain and the Boers broke out. It ended in British victory and the establishment of the Union of South Africa within the then British Empire which became the Commonwealth of Nations in 1961.

Although South Africa was a charter member of the United Nations in 1945, she refused to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1948 the policy of apartheid was enunciated and included for the first time in the platform of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party. That party won the election—also for the first time. The policy has led at different periods—including most recently—to bloody opposition within South Africa and to rising objections from without. Under the policy multi-thousands have been forced into impoverished black homelands (Bantustans) which comprise only 14% of the land of South Africa. There they are considered citizens of dual nationality, but become severely restricted aliens in the rest of the country, which consists of the economically most valuable and viable areas including the cities—all reserved for the white minority population of privilege. Blacks allowed to work in the cities live in outlying separate black townships under many disadvantages of pass laws, inadequate education, pay, housing and health facilities as well as other harsh discriminations. For them, as for miners often drawn from the Bantustans, there are long and painful separations from families.

In 1961 under pressure from the Afrikaners the Union of South Africa withdrew from the British Commonwealth of Nations and became the Republic of South Africa. A new constitution was adopted in 1984 by the Republic which gave separate legislative chambers to white, colored and Asian representatives with overriding major power reserved for the white chamber. It should be especially noted that the majority black population in South Africa is totally without representation although the homelands have been allowed local legislatures.

It is true that P. Botha, the President, has had the government make some few concessions to blacks. For the most part these have been considered hardly more than tokens by the blacks or by critics of apartheid. The changes in government policies and laws have included elimination of illegality of cohabitation or marriage between the races, some easing of job restrictions and some extension of black labor union rights. But blacks, the vast majority of the population, remain severely deprived and increasingly determined to achieve their rights.

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Their frustrations led to great tension not only between blacks and whites but also among different black groups.

Resolution

Therefore, in consonance with the teachings of Judaism, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods:

1. Unalterably condemns and opposes apartheid.
2. Calls upon the Congress of the United States and the Canadian Government and urges its members in other countries to seek firm action from their respective authorities when applicable to:
 1. Ban new business investment in and bank loans to South Africa; ban the importation of all Krugerrands and any other South African gold coins; ban all sales to South Africa of equipment usable for military and police purpose, including computers and computerized equipment;
 2. Ban all sales of nuclear material, equipment and technology; ban the transfer of nuclear “know-how” to South Africa;
 3. Ban governmental contributions to South Africa through the International Monetary Fund.
3. Urges, if substantial progress toward the abolition of apartheid does not occur within two years, the following:
 1. Legislation for the disinvestment of United States and Canadian firms from South Africa.
 2. Institution of a total trade embargo between the United States/Canada and South Africa.
4. Urges the South African Government to end police brutality and to forego Emergency Powers that further deny human rights and civil liberties.
5. Commends those in South Africa and especially the Board of Jewish Deputies, the Southern African Union of Temple Sisterhoods and the Alliance of Concerned Women for their statements, actions, and commitment in opposing apartheid.
6. Urges governmental and communal leaders in South Africa to enter into continuing, meaningful dialogue with leaders of all races in their country; through such dialogue to pursue and develop non-violent solutions toward racial justice, equality and peace—from the advancement of all persons in South Africa and the Republic; toward this end we further urge the immediate unconditional release from prison of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners.
7. Urges the United States, Canada and other countries, and the United Nations to take stronger positions and actions to influence change in South Africa’s racist policy; furthermore we urge all governments that have a free press including the Republic of South Africa to continue free access to all journalists including TV, photo and print.
8. Calls upon Sisterhood members throughout our Federation to individually take actions such as to refrain from the purchase of krugerrands that would personally express their support of this resolution. Further, we urge that Sisterhoods and their members investigate both personal and congregational investments and initiate a process of divestment in corporations doing business in South Africa.