

**April 26, 1989**

**Letter from the President of South Africa P. W.  
Botha to the President of Zambia Requesting  
Pressure on SWAPO to Withdraw Armed Forces from  
Namibia**

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**Summary:**

Letter from South African President P. W. Botha to Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda asserting that SWAPO is the aggressor in escalation tensions between SWAPO and South African forces, and that South Africa is responding in measured and restrained ways. Asks for Zambia's assistance in convincing SWAPO to cease hostilities.

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Tuynhuys, Cape Town

26 April 1989

Dear Mr President

Thank you for your letter of 24 April 1989. I have noted the concern which you express regarding the events in northern Namibia.

I too share your concern that there should not be senseless loss of life in the critical situation which has developed because of the illegal SWAPO incursions into Namibia. I can assure you, Mr. President that the security forces are acting with great responsibility and restraint under very difficult circumstances. However, I am afraid that one-sided and false reports have been disseminated by certain elements, alleging brutalities on the part of the South African security forces. I stand ready to have each and every charge properly investigated, if evidence substantiating improper behavior could be produced.

Mr. President, the facts regarding the situation are by now beyond dispute. After a period of almost eight months during which very few incidents took place, SWAPO decided to bring the war back to Namibia. There can be no other conclusion in view of the intelligence which we have been able to gather since 31 March 1989.

The South African response to this violation of its commitments by SWAPO was measured and, in the circumstances, restrained. Despite the provocation, South Africa at all times acted in strict compliance with the provisions of the agreements it had entered into. South Africa's duty to protect the people of Namibia did not end upon the implementation of the peace process. But we did expect that others who had solemnly accepted the responsibilities placed upon them by the agreements, would honour their commitments.

Thus, while South Africa did what was required to protect life and property in Namibia, in the immediate aftermath of the illegal SWAPO invasion, it also mobilized all available diplomatic means in order to rectify the situation at the earliest opportunity. As you are aware, South Africa's concern led to the meeting at Mount Etjo on 8 and 9 April 1989, where the three countries most directly involved, South Africa, Angola and Cuba, together with the United States and the Soviet Union as observers formulated a procedure which would have allowed SWAPO to withdraw from the Territory of Namibia without being attacked. SWAPO chose not to avail itself of the established procedures. Even under these circumstances the South African security forces exercised restraint in their operations and at the Ruacana meeting which took place on 20 April 1989, a further effort was made to find a solution.

That process is now underway and as you are aware, all South African security forces will be restricted to their bases for a period of sixty hours, commencing at 18h00 local time this evening. It is to be hoped that SWAPO will now use this opportunity to withdraw all its remaining armed elements from Namibia.

I believe, Mr President, that you have a role to play in convincing SWAPO of the error of its ways. It is one thing to piously accept commitments, but quite another to keep to them. SWAPO should now do so. A repetition of the tragic events occasioned by SWAPO's ill-considered actions on 1 April 1989, must not be allowed to re-occur. This would irreparably damage the positive signs we are seeing emerge in the region as countries set aside differences and threats and commit themselves to new relationships on the basis of dialogue and economic co-operation. Your statements in this regard at the celebrations in Swaziland last week, have not gone unnoticed.

In conclusion, Mr President, I would request you to use all means at your disposal to bring the leadership of SWAPO to its senses.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

P W BOTHA

STATE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

His Excellency Dr K D Kaunda, President of the Republic of Zambia, LUSAKA