**President P W Botha offers Nelson Mandela conditional release from prison**

*Nelson Mandela in Robben Island*

**Date:** 31 January, 1985

On 31 January 1985 State President P W Botha offers Nelson Mandela, leader of the banned African National Congress (ANC), conditional release from the prison sentence he had been serving since the conclusion of the Rivonia Trial in 1964. The condition of his release is that he renounces violence, and violent protest, as a means to bring about change in South Africa.

Mandela communicates his refusal of the offer through his daughter, Zinzi Mandela, who reads his statement to this effect at a rally in Soweto on 10 February 1985. He states that the ANC's only adopted violence as a means of protest " *when other forms of resistance were no longer open to us* ". Mandela had refused previous offers of conditional release where the condition was that he be confined to the Transkei.

The offer was also extended to prisoners serving long jail terms for sabotage. 18 accepted, including Dennis Goldberg, the only White found guilty at the Rivonia Trial, and 4 Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) members. Goldberg left South Africa for Israel on 28 February 1985 and the PAC members were released on 15 February.

Mandela had called for the unbanning of the ANC in January 1985 during an interview with Lord Bethell. He asked government to negotiate with the liberatory organisation as a political party. The interview was published in the *Mail on Sunday,* a British publication, in the same month. In response a South African government spokesperson stated that the apartheid regime would be prepared to negotiate with the ANC if the organisation renounced violence.

**References:**

1. Fraser, R (1984). *Keeseing's Records of World Events*, London: Longman.

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/president-p-w-botha-offers-nelson-mandela-conditional-release-prison>