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JOINT APPEAL TO THE STATE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Mr State President

We, the undersigned, call on you most urgently, and in the name of human compassion, to grant clemency to Mr Mangena Jeffrey Boesman who is, we understand, sentenced to be executed on Friday 29 September.

We are strongly and universally opposed to imposition of the death penalty, which is an inhumane and degrading form of punishment in violation of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life. It is because of this that capital punishment has been abolished Federally and in all Australian States, and that the Australian Government regularly raises its concern over the death penalty with other governments.

Moreover, in the case of Mangena Jeffrey Boesman we are deeply concerned that his execution would constitute a particularly severe injustice.

We note that the case was originally heard by a single judge and leave to appeal was refused. We understand that Mr Boesman and his fellow accused were also severely disadvantaged at the start of their trial in November 1986 by their lack of adequate legal representation, that State witnesses were drawn from among those present in the crowd and that such evidence might well therefore be tainted by fear of themselves being charged.

You were able to commute the death sentences of two of his co-accused, and we urge you to do the same in the case of Mr Boesman.

If Mr Boesman is executed, it will be seen by the world as the first political execution authorised by your new Government. It will also be a major blow to the prospects for peace and justice in South Africa.

We have noted that in your inauguration statement you pledged yourself to a quest for peace in South Africa through fairness and justice. We consider that it would signal most clearly to the world that you are determined to pursue this quest if you are able to grant clemency in this case. We call on you most urgently to do so.

Bob Hawke
Prime Minister of Australia

Andrew Peacock
Leader of the Opposition

Janine Haines, Leader
Australian Democrats

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