“What are sanctions?”
Sanctions are punitive measures taken by individuals or a government to show their disapproval of, punish or modify the behavior of another country. Sanctions are usually economic measures and can range from symbolic penalties to full economic warfare.

Since 1959 South African anti-apartheid activists have called for mandatory comprehensive economic sanctions against their country. These would include trade embargoes that would cut off imports and exports, as well as bans on financial relationships such as bank loans or direct corporate investment.

“Does the U.S. have sanctions against South Africa?”
Yes, the U.S. Congress, overriding a presidential veto, imposed limited sanctions on South Africa in 1986. The current law prohibits: new investments; new loans to government agencies; the import of Krugerrands or gold coins; the import of uranium, coal, textiles, agricultural products, crude oil and petroleum products; the import of military articles; the import of articles exported by organizations controlled by the South African government; exports of computer goods and technology to apartheid-enforcing and administering agencies. But the sanctions law has been poorly enforced by the Reagan and Bush administrations and is riddled with loopholes that allow products the Congress intended to ban into the country.

“What impact have sanctions had on South Africa?”
The limited sanctions of the U.S. and other countries have been among the main reasons for recent change in that country. The international arms embargo has forced South Africa to pay markups of up to 100 percent for arms, and they have found it difficult to purchase advanced aircraft and electronic technology. The international oil embargo has forced South Africa to pay up to $2 billion a year to evade the ban by oil producing countries. Over 200 U.S. companies and over 60 British companies have withdrawn from South Africa because of the unfavorable climate resulting from international pressure and sanctions.

The Washington Post recently reported that the cumulative impact of sanctions against South Africa since 1986 is between $32 billion and $42 billion. The Post states that South African losses stem from capital outflows, lost export earnings and slowed growth rates that are the result of U.S. and other sanctions.

“Shouldn’t we give de Klerk a sign of support and relax some of our sanctions?”
De Klerk and his ruling National Party have made it clear that they do not support majority rule in South Africa. Although committed to reform, their goal is to fashion a complicated power-sharing arrangement that would guarantee continued white domination by giving whites veto power. The anti-apartheid movement of South Africa, since the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, has called for a non-racial democratic South Africa. They will accept nothing less and neither should we.

“But hasn’t de Klerk made changes?”
Yes, South African President F.W. de Klerk announced a number of changes on February 2 in his opening address to Parliament. Many of the announced reforms, however, were laws overturned in practice by the people of South Africa during the Mass Defiance Campaigns conducted in 1989.

Since February the South African government has:
- released Nelson Mandela and a few other political prisoners;
- suspended the use of the death penalty;
- lifted banning orders restricting political activists;
- lifted the State of Emergency in all provinces except Natal;
- lifted the Separate Amenities Act which segregated public facilities.

De Klerk has also entered into talks with the African National Congress (ANC), the national liberation organization.

But over 2,000 political prisoners remain in jail and there has been no general amnesty for exiled activists and several exiles have been rearrested. Violence against activists has actually escalated in many areas, especially in Natal.

“Don’t the changes mean that apartheid is almost over?”
No! Even with the release of Mandela and other changes the apartheid system remains in effect. De Klerk’s reforms have not touched the “pillars of apartheid,” which include the:
- Group Areas Act—which prohibits different races from living in the same community;
- Population Registration Act, which uses race to determine access to social services;
- Land Acts—which restrict land ownership to 4 million whites who control 87 percent of the land, leaving 13 percent to some 28 million blacks.

Also, brutal laws developed to protect the system, including the Internal Security Act, remain intact. Under existing security legislation, the ANC leadership, including Nelson Mandela, could be re-arrested at any time.

“Does the U.S. have sanctions against South Africa?”
Yes, the U.S. Congress, overriding a presidential veto, imposed limited sanctions on South Africa in 1986. The current law prohibits: new investments; new loans to government agencies; the import of Krugerrands or gold coins; the import of uranium, coal, textiles, agricultural products, crude oil and petroleum products; the import of military articles; the import of articles exported by organizations controlled by the South African government; exports of computer goods and technology to apartheid-enforcing and administering agencies. But the sanctions law has been poorly enforced by the Reagan and Bush administrations and is riddled with loopholes that allow products the Congress intended to ban into the country.

“Sanctions have nothing to do with apartheid enforcers!”
Sanctions are punitive measures taken by individuals or a government to show their disapproval of, punish or modify the behavior of another country. Sanctions are usually economic measures and can range from symbolic penalties to full economic warfare.

Since 1959 South African anti-apartheid activists have called for mandatory comprehensive economic sanctions against their country. These would include trade embargoes that would cut off imports and exports, as well as bans on financial relationships such as bank loans or direct corporate investment.

“Does the U.S. have sanctions against South Africa?”
Yes, the U.S. Congress, overriding a presidential veto, imposed limited sanctions on South Africa in 1986. The current law prohibits: new investments; new loans to government agencies; the import of Krugerrands or gold coins; the import of uranium, coal, textiles, agricultural products, crude oil and petroleum products; the import of military articles; the import of articles exported by organizations controlled by the South African government; exports of computer goods and technology to apartheid-enforcing and administering agencies. But the sanctions law has been poorly enforced by the Reagan and Bush administrations and is riddled with loopholes that allow products the Congress intended to ban into the country.

“What impact have sanctions had on South Africa?”
The limited sanctions of the U.S. and other countries have been among the main reasons for recent change in that country. The international arms embargo has forced South Africa to pay markups of up to 100 percent for arms, and they have found it difficult to purchase advanced aircraft and electronic technology. The international oil embargo has forced South Africa to pay up to $2 billion a year to evade the ban by oil producing countries. Over 200 U.S. companies and over 60 British companies have withdrawn from South Africa because of the unfavorable climate resulting from international pressure and sanctions.

The Washington Post recently reported that the cumulative impact of sanctions against South Africa since 1986 is between $32 billion and $42 billion. The Post states that South African losses stem from capital outflows, lost export earnings and slowed growth rates that are the result of U.S. and other sanctions.

“Shouldn’t we give de Klerk a sign of support and relax some of our sanctions?”
De Klerk and his ruling National Party have made it clear that they do not support majority rule in South Africa. Although committed to reform, their goal is to fashion a complicated power-sharing arrangement that would guarantee continued white domination by giving whites veto power. The anti-apartheid movement of South Africa, since the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, has called for a non-racial democratic South Africa. They will accept nothing less and neither should we.
"Doesn't de Klerk face a threat from conservatives?"

The idea that maintaining sanctions against the Pretoria government will solidify white opposition to change in South Africa is not true. Since 1948 most whites have firmly supported the policy of apartheid, but in the past decade pressures from the international community and from inside South Africa have badly split white unity. Today, according to a 1990 report published by the Investor Responsibility Research Center only nine percent of the white population is solidly pro-apartheid. It is true that the Conservative Party is growing and that violent right-wing terrorist groups are increasingly vocal and active. But the only way to minimize terrorist violence is to forcefully investigate and prosecute those responsible. Until now the South African police have used their resources and skills to investigate and detain anti-apartheid activists. If there is the political will, they can now take action against those who really pose a threat to the future of the country.

Whites are less than 17 percent of the population in South Africa. Of that, a minority, the equivalent of 1.5 percent of the total population—is vehemently opposed to change. To relax sanctions to pacify that percentage is absurd and is a disservice to the majority of both black and white South Africans.

Ultimately, the only way to dissipate the threats from conservatives and others is to encourage the negotiations process where the views of all South Africans can be accommodated as a democratic and non-racial South Africa is developed.

"Won't continued sanctions hurt blacks?"

Before sanctions, unemployment among blacks was between 25-35 percent. In some "bantustans" where tens of thousands of Blacks are forced by apartheid laws to live, unemployment is reportedly as high as 50 percent — before any sanctions were applied. The apartheid system generates systemic unemployment to maintain a cheap labor pool and to exert leverage over those who are working.

The human costs of apartheid have been exorbitant. Apartheid dictates an inferior education system for Blacks, a dysfunctional and over-burdened health care system and the fabric of society has been ripped by the forced separation of families. In fact, the entire southern Africa region has paid the high price of apartheid. South Africa has conducted an economic and military war against the region that, according to the UN, has cost the region nearly $56 billion. Sanctions have not caused this situation which "hurts blacks the most," apartheid has.

"But if we maintain sanctions aren't we moving the goalpost?"

The original intent of the current law—the 1986 anti-apartheid act—was to maintain pressure until apartheid was dismantled. But many long-time opponents to sanctions, like the Bush administration, are urging that sanctions be relaxed or lifted as quickly as possible. They point to the 1986 act and say that once the State of Emergency in Natal and the question of political prisoners are resolved then all of the act's termination requirements will have been met.

But the law also requires that substantial progress be made towards the dismantling of apartheid and establishing a nonracial democracy before the President proposes changing it. This condition has not been met. The South African Council of Churches in their 1990 Conference passed a resolution advising the international community that sanctions be maintained until the negotiating process is "irreversible" They define "irreversible" as when: 1) a constituent assembly responsible for writing a new constitution is formed; 2) governing authority is removed from the current apartheid legislative structures and invoked either in the constituent assembly or an interim structure; 3) the white minority can not legally reverse or veto the process through the present legislative bodies.

It was the people of South Africa who initiated and who have maintained the call for mandatory comprehensive sanctions. And citizens of the world, including the people of the U.S., responded by demanding that their governments impose sanctions. In deciding when those sanctions should be lifted, we should also follow the lead of the majority in South Africa.

"But aren't U.S. corporations a positive force for change in South Africa?"

U.S. companies pay over $200 million per year in taxes to the apartheid government. President Reagan's October 2, 1987 sanctions report to Congress claimed that U.S. corporations spent $200 million in a ten year period on social programs for Blacks there. But in that same ten year period, corporations paid over one billion dollars in taxes to fund the apartheid army, policy and other repressive structures. Withdrawing that tax income and technical expertise from South Africa is the most positive change that U.S. corporations can make.

Offering some programs limited to those urban Blacks working in U.S. companies does not address the major concern of the southern Africa region has paid the high price of apartheid. Majority population. The struggle for justice in South Africa is not for training programs for a few, but justice for all.

Lobby Congress to "Keep the Pressure On!"

- Many Members of Congress and their staffs many say that they have not heard from their hometowns on this issue. Visit, write or telegram your Representative and Senators. Express your support for the maintenance and intensification of sanctions.
- Organize a delegation from your church, school, union or community group to meet with your Representative and Senators. Use these talking points to prepare your delegation.
- All Members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate are up for re-election this year. In public forums, question the candidates. Make sanctions an election issue!