Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Delegates, My fellow NGO members and friends;

On behalf of the American Committee on Africa, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Political Committee for hearing testimony on the important work that the Anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. is doing and in particular for inviting our organization to testify at these hearings.

While the U.S. anti-apartheid movement has not been in the news to the same extent that it has in other recent periods, it is important that we recognize that there has been and continues to be a wealth of activity and dynamism around anti-apartheid and southern Africa support issues. It is also important that we understand that the lack of media coverage of the activities of the anti-apartheid movement is directly linked to the media blackout that has been imposed by the racist regime in Pretoria. And while the lack of press attention may make it harder for us to get our ideas out and impact on the situation in South Africa, we must remember that our Brothers and Sisters suffer and struggle whether or not there is a journalist there to report on their situation.

In addition to the media blackout, in recent months we have seen an increase in the amount of propaganda being disseminated by the forces of apartheid. Whether it comes in the form of advertisements taken out by the racist regime itself, or by South African business interests trying to salvage an economy in crisis, the combination of these efforts is yet another reason for us to continue in our work so that we can help speed that day when the Black majority will rule in a unified, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

Some of the arenas in which there has been important activity and where we must move forward to organize for added actions are: the divestment movement, the campaign for national sanctions legislation, and the growing movement in support of the release of detainees and political prisoners.
Divestment  The divestment or "people's sanctions" movement continues to move ahead and year by year the number of states, cities, colleges and universities and other institutions that have taken investment action against apartheid is growing. There are now a total of 23 states, 73 cities and 128 colleges and universities that have taken action to divest themselves of investments in companies that do business with South Africa. Additionally, we have seen some significant victories in the form of attempts by U.S. corporations to distance themselves from apartheid as a result of the pressures that divestment campaigns have put on them. As with many things, these victories have come with both positive and negative effects.

On the positive side, over the last 18 months well over 100 U.S. companies have taken steps to "withdraw" from South Africa. This means that the combination of continuing pressure from struggle and resistance inside the country and divestment pressures at home have forced these companies to move away from a stance which advocated continued U.S. and other foreign investment as a curative to the ills of apartheid. They have now been forced to move to a position where, whether they are willing to admit it or not, their actions prove our contention that the only way that they can contribute to a solution in South Africa is by ceasing to support the racist regime with their investments in the apartheid economy. This is clearly to the good.

The problem has been that while many of these corporations, IBM, General Motors, Ford Motor Company and Coca Cola to name but a few, have claimed to "withdraw" from South Africa, in reality they have said one thing and continued to do another. Many, indeed most, of these actions have been nothing but a rearrangement of ownership with the U.S. parent company selling out their interests to the South African subsidiary. The U.S. parent then continues to supply the newly formed South African company with the brand names, expertise and technology it needs through the use of franchise and licensing agreements. Under these conditions, the U.S. corporation continues to make a profit from the money paid to it for franchise and license fees, and the South African economy continues to benefit from the use of the technology and expertise that the U.S. corporation provides. Clearly this arrangement has come to be called "sham withdrawal" for good reason.

It is unmistakable that these attempts have been made by corporations as a way to deflect divestment pressures without having to forego the profits to be made from doing business with South Africa. Happily, this strategy has only had a limited amount of success. On the one hand, many of the companies that have left South Africa have done so completely, and have no continuing ties. And the movement that was to have been fooled by these actions has not been.

As the pace of "sham withdrawals" has increased, so has the response of the divestment movement. Just this past summer, the state of Missouri passed a divestment law that used as its definition of doing business with South Africa, a new set of guidelines that were developed by ACOA and other national Anti-apartheid organizations and specifically target companies that continue to have these indirect investments in apartheid. The state of Massachusetts is currently debating selective purchasing legislation that would bar the state from purchasing goods and/or services from companies that continue to have ties, direct or indirect, to South Africa. There are a number of other laws in cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco that continue to target "sham withdrawal" companies as well.
Sanctions  The Anti-apartheid movement won a significant victory in 1986 when the U.S. Congress overrode a veto by President Reagan and imposed a set of limited sanctions against the Pretoria regime. The blow that was struck against the "Constructive Engagement" policy of the Reagan Administration was significant, and now the Administration is fighting back. On the 4th of October, the President issued a report that was required by the 1986 sanctions law and was supposed to outline what further sanctions would be imposed in the event that the Pretoria regime had taken no significant steps at dismantling apartheid.

Instead of recommending additional sanctions, however, the Administration used the report as a diatribe against sanctions generally, saying that because the racist regime had not dismantled apartheid as a result of one year of limited U.S. sanctions, then obviously sanctions don't work. The idea of the report was to shift the terms of the debate away from which new sanctions should be imposed, and re-open the whole question of sanctions as a strategy for pressuring the racist regime. But while the Administration is working to avert passage of the comprehensive, mandatory sanctions that have been called for by the U.N., the people of the United States are already working on ways to make sure that they become the law of the land.

In late October of this year, ACOA held a midwest regional organizers meeting on sanctions in St. Louis, Missouri. At this meeting participants from Iowa, Kansas, Illinois and Missouri came together and planned strategies about concrete ways that the organizing ideas that have worked so well in the divestment/people's sanctions movement could be put to use to build momentum for passage of national comprehensive sanctions legislation. The meeting was quite successful, and brought forth good ideas about how to generate interest and activity on the issue from trade unions, churches and community-based organizations. One of the most important recommendations that came out of the meeting was that we start making much more explicit links between the campaigns for divestment and national sanctions legislation.

Detainees  The plight of those who have been unjustly imprisoned or detained without charge or trial has been an area in which there has been an increasing amount of work done recently. In response to the tremendous increase in detentions resulting from the imposition of the state of emergency by Pretoria, ACOA's associated organization, the Africa Fund initiated an "Unlock Apartheid's Jails" campaign as a way to help refocus attention generally on the issue of South Africa and specifically on the need to end the detentions and imprisonment of those whose only crime is opposing apartheid.

The focus of the campaign has been the collection of keys by local groups, schools trade unions and churches with the demand that the racist regime "Unlock Apartheid's Jails." Participants in the campaign have been furnished with lists of detainees and accounts of the conditions under which detainees and political prisoners are held and are encouraged to work with their groups to collect keys that are then presented to the the minority regime as a symbol of the demand that they "Unlock Apartheid's Jails." Keys have been collected in most of the 50 states, and an initial 30,000, or one for each detainee, were dropped at the Consulate in New York. There has also been a very successful press conference with noted television personality Bill Cosby, the mayors of 8 major U.S. cities and H.E. Joseph Garba, Chairman of the U.N. Special Committee Against Apartheid. A second dropping of keys will take place at the Embassy in Washington D.C. on the 15th of December.