

IMUN 2022 Research Report

Historical Security Council - Arrest of Nelson Mandela

The question of ensuring free speech for political opponents

The 1948-1994 period of South Africa's history is known for the racial segregation policy, Apartheid. True to its meaning in Afrikaans, "apartness", this legislative policy was created to effectively govern the segregated races, particularly, the white wealthy minority and the nonwhite majority, perpetuating a regime of political and economic discrimination against all Bantu and Coloured (britanica). Following the Population Registration act (1950), which classified the whole population into race-based strata, the Group Areas Act (1950) assigned each particular race to business and residence sectors within the country, later facilitating the prohibition of any social contact between the races (. Upon strengthening of the "pass" laws, black commuters fell into the hands of the authorities and black communities had their basic rights as citizens revoked ().

Nelson Mandela, born in 1918, joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944 participating in multiple protests and organized campaigns against the Apartheid regime (). In 1952, he was charged for his involvement with the Defiance Campaign (). On the 21st of March, 1960, 69 protestors against the pass laws were murdered by the police, initiating a state of emergency which resulted in innumerable arrests, including Mandela, who dropped the nonviolent approach to the issue and helped establish, in 1961 Umkhonto weSizwe(). In early 1962 he left South Africa to gain support for the armed struggle, but upon his return on August 5th he was arrested and posteriorly sentenced to life in prison (Trials and Prisons).

The question of ensuring free speech for political opponents is meant to guide delegates towards what constitutes free speech as an individual's right within their society. Furthermore, given the case at hand, it is important to debate measures to protect the rights of political opponents, and measures to protect individuals from governments according to the delegations' stances. It is especially important to properly address the purpose of democracy within each country, which will constitute a big portion of the debate, considering the delegations (USSR, Republic of China etc.) and the historical period. Nelson Mandela's arrest will serve as an example of an individual whose case will divide delegations according to their positions on racial segregation, democracy, sovereignty etc.

Works Cited

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