

The UNGA and the Security Council have been seized of the questions of apartheid and of the administration of the trust territory of South West Africa (now Namibia) for many years, but it was not until 1966, after the unilateral declaration of independence by Rhodesia, that the UN took concrete action. The Security Council imposed economic sanctions against Rhodesia and the UNGA terminated South Africa's mandate to administer Namibia. Neither action was accepted by South Africa, leading to proposals by African and other members that sanctions be applied to South Africa itself. These have been opposed by most Western members on the essentially pragmatic grounds that they would be very difficult to enforce and would be unlikely to lead to major changes in South Africa's policies. With the accession to independence in 1975 of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, however, the pressure on South Africa to comply with UN resolutions has markedly increased. At the time of writing, solutions based on majority rule in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and in Namibia are under discussion, although the nature of continuing UN involvement with both countries is still unclear.

At UNGA XXXI, there were ten resolutions grouped under the agenda item entitled "Policies of Apartheid of the Government of South Africa", of which Canada supported four. Canada opposed two resolutions, one of which condoned the use of "armed struggle" by the people of South Africa and called for sanctions, and another that condemned Israel for collaborating with South Africa. Canada abstained on four resolutions that, inter alia, condemned normal state-to-state relations and urged all countries to break off normal trade and commercial relations.

On the question of Namibia, Canada supported six resolutions at the 1976 session that, inter alia, condemned the illegal South African administration and called for the independence of Namibia and for UN-supervised elections. Canada abstained on resolutions supporting armed struggle by the Namibian people and according observer status to SWAPO as the sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people.

In voting for resolutions concerning Southern Rhodesia at the 1976 session, Canada reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Zimbabwe to self-determination, freedom and independence, and supported the continuation of the boycott of the minority regime, which it had favoured in previous sessions.

The question of South Africa's racial policies is far from settled, however. The majority of UN members argue that the Security Council should declare the situation in South Africa a threat to peace and impose sanctions on South Africa, including, if necessary, the use of force. The U.S.A., Britain and France have vetoed proposals of this kind in the Security Council and the Assembly can do no more than recommend such courses of action. The situation is likely to remain at an impasse until the Government of South Africa begins to respond to the pressures for change, especially from internal sources. In the meantime, the African members, of the UN, supported by most Asian and Latin American members, are likely to continue to press Western members to sever all links with South Africa and to expel the latter from the UN.