

Other Front Line States also felt the weight of South African pressure. In June 1985 South African commandos attacked ANC offices in Gaborone, the capital of neighbouring Botswana. In July a bomb planted by South African agents devastated ANC headquarters in Zambia. In January 1986, the Government of Lesotho was toppled after intense economic pressure from South Africa.

Responding to those developments, in the summer of 1985 all EEC members recalled their ambassadors from Pretoria and France and the United States imposed limited economic sanctions. At the October 1985 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Nassau the Eminent Persons Group was formed to promote dialogue and to seek a peaceful solution to the increasingly volatile situation in South Africa.

Initially it was hoped that this Commonwealth initiative might lead to constructive dialogue between the Government and black opposition organizations. The Eminent Persons Group presented the Government with proposals for the release of Nelson Mandela and the legalization of the ANC, the suspension of ANC paramilitary activities and the initiation of dialogue leading to the establishment of a non-racial democratic government. But, on 19 May 1986, as the Group was finishing its discussions in the country, South African commandos carried out attacks on alleged ANC centres in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Group left South Africa immediately. In its report to the Commonwealth Heads of State on 12 June, the Group concluded that:

while the Government claims to be ready to negotiate, it is in truth not yet prepared to negotiate fundamental change, nor to countenance the creation of genuine democratic structures, nor to face the prospect of the end of white domination....Its programme of reform does not end apartheid, but seeks to give it a less inhuman face.

After noting that, in the view of the black leadership in South Africa,