

Other Front Line States also felt the weight of South African pressure. Those developments provoked a reaction in the West and 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 Meeting in Nassau, the Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed to sanctions against South Africa (notably a ban on new investment and agricultural imports) and they decided to form an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to promote dialogue and seek a peaceful solution to the increasingly volatile situation in Africa. There were seven members in the Group: Archbishop Ted Scott of the Anglican Church of Canada; the former Australian prime minister, Malcolm Fraser; General Olusegun Abansanjo of Nigeria; Lord Barber, a former British Chancellor of the Exchequer; Nita Barrow, Barbados permanent representative at the United Nations; John Molecela a former Tanzanian member of Parliament and Sanhar Swasan Singh, an Indian minister.

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 South African 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. In February 1986, in response to internal and external pressure South Africa announced some limited reforms including the abolition of pass-books for the blacks. 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: