



NELSON MANDELA
FOUNDATION

27 December 2001

My Dear Mister President

We trust that this letter finds you well and in good health. Please accept our best wishes over the festive season. We hope that you had a joyful Christmas and may the new year bring happiness, peace and prosperity to yourself, your family and the people of the United States.

Mister President, I am writing primarily to brief you about a public statement I am due to release soon. It concerns my own stance on the war efforts in Afghanistan and I thought it appropriate and proper that you be informed before its release.

As you will recall, Mister President, during our last visit to the United States - and on a number of occasions subsequently - we expressed our unreserved support for your actions in Afghanistan in pursuit of Osama bin Laden and his organisation who are suspected of being responsible for the terror attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September. We expressed the opinion that tragic as war may be, it was justified in this case as it proved the only method available for flushing out the terrorists whom the Taliban government in Afghanistan refused to hand over to the United States.

We have become aware that the unreserved manner in which we offered that support could be, and in fact was being interpreted as if we were insensitive to and uncaring about the suffering inflicted upon the Afghan people in the process of war. It was also persuasively brought to our attention that our labelling of Osama bin Laden as the terrorist responsible for those acts before he had been tried and convicted could also be seen as undermining some of the basic tenets of the rule of law.

You yourself, Mister President, as well as Prime Minister Tony Blair have repeatedly made it clear that the war against terrorism was in no way a war against Islam or Muslim countries. We ourselves also repeatedly emphasised that point. We are, however, sensitive to the fact that the manner in which we might have stated our position could have been hurtful to Muslim communities all over the world, including our own country.

We enclose a copy of the statement we are due to release. We know that we do not need to convince you, Mister President, of our total opposition to all forms of terror. With you we insist that those responsible for the horrendous deeds of 11 September should be apprehended and made to pay for their inhumane deeds.

We trust that the people of Afghanistan will be entering a new phase of political, social and economic reconstruction and that they will at last be free from the suffering of war of which they have had so much. And, Mister President, we know that you will use your enormous power and influence to assist in the search for just and lasting peace in all those conflict situations that provide such fertile breeding ground for extremists and terrorists.

Mister President, please remain assured of our highest esteem. You are one of the leaders in the world for whom we have the greatest admiration and regard, and you can always be certain of our support for your efforts to bring peace to the world.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mandela'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first few letters being particularly stylized.

N R MANDELA

President George W Bush
The United States of America

Att: Copy of statement