

The United Nations and The Anti-Apartheid in Sport Movement

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The United Nations has long sought means to pressure South Africa into changing its apartheid system. However, only recently have resolutions turned that pressure towards sport. This study was undertaken to investigate the development of these anti-apartheid sport resolutions and to explore their effect on United Nations member states, national and international sports federations, and the anti-apartheid sport movement.

Between 1968 and 1978 the United Nations passed eight resolutions concerned with apartheid sport. The first two, 1968 and 1970, were simple statements calling for states and organizations to boycott South African sports teams. From that time the resolutions became more specific and demanding. The 1971 resolution contained eleven points which ran the gamut of commending and condemning states and sports groups, depending on what their sports behavior had been, to actually claiming that merit selection was the only criterion for selecting a sports team. Although the next three resolutions, 1972, 1973, 1975, each added a slight change to the 1971, they were more or less supportive of this resolution. The 1976 resolution was the most aggressive of all the resolutions. It specifically stated that states should deny official recognition, financial aid, and facilities to their teams which maintained sport ties with South Africa. It was also suggested that visas be denied South African sportsmen. Besides these specific points the administrative framework was established for the development of both an international declaration and convention against apartheid sport. In 1977 an eighteen point declaration, a composite of all the previous resolutions was passed. The drafting of the convention still in progress should appear sometime in 1979.

The pertinent resolutions, then, have grown in the intensity of their demands, leading to the development of the "International Declaration against Apartheid," and it seems likely that it will culminate in an international convention. Though these documents are not legally binding on member states or private organizations, they do appear to have had some effect on states, sports organizations, and the anti-apartheid sport campaign.

States, though often bound by their national constitutions from interfering with private organizations, have supported the resolutions. Since 1974 on six known occasions, certain countries have applied financial pressure against their teams for sports exchanges with South Africa. Refusal of entry visas to South African sportsmen is another method employed and has been used by different states on twenty known occasions.

The response of sports organizations to the resolutions is more ambiguous. However, since the 1968 resolution, South Africa has been expelled from seven international federations and suspended from seven others. In ten federations of which they are still members, they may only compete as individuals. Tour cancellations and invitations withdrawn by national sports bodies have occurred thirty-seven times since 1968. South Africa maintains membership in twenty-seven international federations, of which the International Tennis Federation is the only major sport represented.

The anti-apartheid sports campaign has been directly aided by the resolutions because they opened the way for the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid to become involved. The Special Committee has supplied much material support to the pressure against South Africa.

Finally, the most important function of the resolutions has been to give the aura of legitimacy to the movement. Even though United Nations approval is more moral than legal, United Nations approval or disapproval is important because statesmen attach importance to it. From the exploration of the United Nations' impact on the anti-apartheid campaign, this seems to be quite true.