

NEWS

from

Paul

Tsongas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 8/5/82
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U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

TSONGAS URGES POLITICAL ASYLUM FOR DENNIS BRUTUS, EXILED SOUTH AFRICAN POET AND SCHOLAR

Senator Paul E. Tsongas, joined by seven Senate colleagues, has given added impetus to the effort to prevent the deportation of Dennis Brutus, a black South African poet. Tsongas and his colleagues have written to Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, urging the State Department to grant political asylum to Brutus, an exiled South African poet and scholar.

Brutus who has been a professor of English at Northwestern University in Evanston Illinois for the last ten years, spent the last academic year as a visiting professor at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts. Tsongas, the ranking minority member on the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called Brutus "a distinguished poet, scholar and human rights advocate." He urged the State Department to grant Brutus' application for political asylum in the U.S. on the basis that Dr. Brutus' return to Southern Africa might "seriously endanger his life". Dr. Brutus could be "immediately imprisoned" if he is deported to South Africa and "reliable evidence exists which suggests that his life may be in danger" if he is deported to Zimbabwe, Tsongas emphasized.

The Senator went on to point out that Professor Brutus enjoys an international reputation as an authority on African literature and culture as well as for his outspoken and steadfast opposition to racism and oppression in South Africa. "Dr. Brutus' literary works have been widely published and his statements and activities opposing apartheid in South Africa have been well documented. Professor Brutus has become a high profile spokesman for the anti-apartheid movement" the Senator said.

The letter to Abrams was co-signed by Senators Claiborne Pell, Alan Cranston, Carl Levin, George Mitchell, Ernest Hollings, David Pryor and Bill Bradley. It urges the State Department "to grant political asylum and keep the gates of America open to human rights advocates." "Our Nation has historically offered protection to those persons fleeing persecution for their outspoken support of human rights. Dennis Brutus is such a man" Senator Tsongas concluded.