

Winnie Mandela, Defying Pretoria, Vows Vengeance

By ALAN COWELL, Special to The New York Times

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MAMELODI, South Africa, Dec. 3 — Winnie Mandela, breaking an officially imposed silence, pledged vengeance today for the blood of fallen blacks at what she said was the first mass rally she had addressed in 25 years.

Mrs. Mandela, an anti-apartheid activist and the wife of the black leader Nelson Mandela, spoke from a platform in a soccer stadium shortly after 12 out of 15 people slain by the police here on Nov. 21 were buried in a mass funeral.

“This is our country,” Mrs. Mandela said. “In the same way as you have had to bury our children today, so shall the blood of these heroes we buried today be avenged.”

Those buried today included five blacks over the age of 50 and a two-month-old baby boy, said to have choked on tear gas fired by the police.

Diplomats from 11 non-Communist countries, including the United States, attended the funeral. Timothy M. Carney, political counselor at the United States Embassy, who attended the ceremony, said it was the first time an official American representative had attended such a mass burial.

The 11 diplomats represented the United States, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and West Germany.

In Pretoria, close to this segregated black township, meanwhile, President P. W. Botha, saying that “the revolutionary climate is fast losing momentum,” announced the lifting of a state-of-emergency decree in 8 of the 38 districts where it is in force.

The eight districts, in the Eastern Cape and the Transvaal, were all small settlements that had not figured prominently in the 14 months of violence that has taken about 935 lives around the country. The emergency decree is still in force in major nonwhite townships around Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

Mamelodi is not covered by the state of emergency. Seeming to defy Mr. Botha’s assessment of the situation, an estimated 30,000 black people, including Mrs. Mandela, gathered under the black, green and gold banner of the outlawed African National Congress for the burial of the 12 dead.

Mrs. Mandela, whose husband is the leader of the African National Congress, is what is known in South Africa as a “banned” person.

Under the terms of the banning order, she is banished to a segregated black township outside the remote town of Brandfort, may not meet with more than one other person at a time and may not address public meetings. She may not be quoted in South Africa but her words often appear in publications abroad.

Since her home in Brandfort was damaged by fire in August, Mrs. Mandela has shown increasing readiness to defy the white authorities who set the terms of her most recent ban eight years ago.

She has been under restrictions of one form or another for almost a quarter century, and her husband, has been serving a life sentence for sabotage and plotting revolution for 23 years.

Her appearance at an impromptu gathering of over 2,000 blacks after the mass funeral here today, however, was her most audacious and defiant challenge to the authorities so far.

Climbing onto the wooden stage, she waved a clenched-fist salute proclaiming the black nationalist slogan “Amandla,” meaning power. The crowd shouted back: “Awetu” — “It shall be ours.”

“I bring you a message of love from those you sent outside to help fight for this liberation that has led to our burying our children,” she said in reference to the African National Congress, the best known of exiled guerrilla movements seeking the violent overthrow of rule by the white minority.

“I bring you a message of love from your leaders inside prison,” she said.

“Pretoria has failed to rule this country,” she declared. “The solution of this country’s problems lies in black hands.”

“We promise you that the mandate you gave us shall be carried through to the hilt,” she said in reference to the Congress’s pledge to overthrow the white authorities by force and introduce universal franchise.

“The day is not far when we shall lead you to freedom,” she said. Then she sped from the stadium in a high-powered sedan as a yellow-painted police helicopter circled overhead.

She switched cars later to drive past police and army roadblocks on the outskirts of the township.

The speech presented the authorities with an acute dilemma. If Mrs. Mandela is permitted to continue flouting her banning order, then the white government could seem weak in the eyes of both blacks and whites, and might appear to acknowledge her

political influence. If the authorities enforce the ban, the action would almost certainly be presented by their critics as evidence that the government's promises of political and racial reform are hollow.

Moreover, if Mrs. Mandela is again confined to Brandfort, in the Orange Free State, the authorities' international credibility could be further weakened when Western bankers are seeking assurances, in return for rescheduling the nation's \$24 billion foreign debt, that the government will undertake political changes to defuse the unrest.

Mrs. Mandela said she had decided spontaneously to address the gathering and told reporters that the last time she spoke before a mass rally was in 1960 to the Indian Youth Congress.

Throughout today's funeral, and at the subsequent, impromptu gathering, the police and army remained outside Mamelodi, as part of a deal with clerics who addressed the funeral. By early evening there had been no reports of violence.

Those buried today died on Nov. 21 when the police fired on a crowd estimated at 50,000 that included many elderly women protesting rent increases and other grievances.

In Pretoria, President Botha said he believed that "elements that are ideologically opposed to orderly reform" were being defeated.

The comment seemed certain to be challenged by Mr. Botha's foes. While some segregated black townships, notably east of Johannesburg, seem less tense than earlier this year, violence has continued unabated, spilling beyond areas under emergency rule and into other places like Queenstown in the Eastern Cape, where 14 people were killed last month, and Mamelodi.

Moreover, in the month since television coverage of areas of unrest was outlawed, and restrictions were placed on other reporters, more than 80 people have died in confrontations with the police and in other violence pitting radical blacks against those they call stooges for the white authorities.

Television crews and other journalists were allowed free access to today's rally.

Mr. Carney, the American diplomat who attended the funeral here today, said Washington's decision to be represented reflected American commitment to "peaceful protest and due process." He denied, however, that it represented a shift of the United States policy towards South Africa, known as "constructive engagement."