

*Salim Ahmed Salim*

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## THE OFFICE OF DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM

Former Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania  
Former Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity

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### *Diplomatic Tensions Between Presidents Mandela and Mugabe Over DRC Sparked Urgent Strategic Maneuvering*

**Dar es Salaam:** The outbreak of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on August 2, 1998, just 14 months after the end of the anti-Mobutu coalition conflict, escalated into a devastating regional war, involving nearly nine African nations. The conflict posed a serious test to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its ability to mediate such complex crises, with little space for diplomatic maneuvering.

The strained relationship between Presidents Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe added a layer of complexity. As senior statesmen, both leaders were expected to play a key role in diplomatic efforts, yet their opposing stances on the DRC—Zimbabwe backing President Laurent-Desire Kabila, while South Africa maintained neutrality—fueled tensions.

Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim's efforts to ease the rift and facilitate dialogue are captured in newly released materials from the Salim Ahmed Salim Digital Archive ([SAS Digital Archive](#)). The latest round of new notes and materials sheds light on the diplomatic maneuvering and delicate conversations across various African capitals that was required to diffuse tensions between President Mandela and President Mugabe.

Among the newly available materials are declassified documents, including:

[Discussion with President Mandela on Developments in the DRC \(August 8, 1998\)](#)

[Telephone Conversation with Laurent Kabila Leader of ADFL and defacto Head of State of Zaire \(May 17, 1997\)](#)

[Meeting with President Mobutu in Saint Martin France \(November 29, 1996\)](#)

[Conversation with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on the DRC Conflict \(August 28, 1998\)](#)

[Meeting with President Yoweri Museveni and President George H. Bush \(October 1, 1990\)](#)

[Discussion with Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice on Ethiopia-Eritrea War \(June 19, 1998\)](#)

[Meeting with Mwalimu Nyerere on the UNSG Question and Olof Palme's Commission \(July 3, 1980\)](#)

[Conversation with President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe on the DRC Conflict \(August 25, 1998\)](#)

The SAS Digital Archive continues to provide a unique lens through the legacy of Dr. Salim that illustrates Tanzania's role in African and international affairs, sharing perspectives on the continent's political and diplomatic history.

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