APARTHEID EXTENDED:
South Africa’s Illegal Occupation of NAMIBIA

“We Namibians are demanding our freedom and independence in full from the Governments of South Africa and America . . . We shall never retreat [from] our demand . . . ”
Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, May 6, 1986

AFRICA’S LAST COLONY

Namibia is Africa’s last colony. Although Europeans first came to Namibia in the fifteenth century, it was only in 1884 that it officially became a German colony. In May 1915, South African troops occupied Namibia and ruled it on behalf of the European allies until the end of World War I. After the war, the League of Nations granted South Africa a legal mandate to administer Namibia. Since then South Africa has ruled Namibia under the racist system of apartheid. Twenty years ago, in October 1966, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly terminated the mandate for South Africa’s administration of Namibia. In 1969 the UN Security Council declared South Africa’s continued occupation of Namibia to be illegal. South Africa has defied world opinion and the demands of the UN, the International Court of Justice and national governments that it must withdraw from Namibia.

In Namibia, just as in South Africa, Blacks live under a legalized system of racial oppression and therefore are socially segregated and economically exploited, solely on the basis of race. They are denied all rights and have no voice or participation in the governing of their own nation. All rights and power are reserved for the white minority who are only 5% of the population!

SOUTH AFRICAN EXPLOITATION . . .

Namibia is rich in natural resources: valuable minerals, prolific coastal waters, cattle and sheep ranches, and desert and wilderness areas of unequaled beauty.

However, the Black majority has benefitted only marginally from the rich resources. Huge multinational corporations, including U.S. businesses such as Newmont Mining and AMAX, exploit Namibia’s natural resources for the benefit of South Africa and other western nations. Black workers receive low wages for dangerous work. The contract labor system forces them to live away from their families and workers cannot choose a job, resign or bargain for wages.

. . . AND REPRESSION

South Africa has been ruthless in its repression of the Namibian people. More than 100,000 South African Defense Force soldiers together with police and paramilitary forces make up South Africa’s army of occupation. Along with the secret police unit named Counter-Insurgency Unit (COIN) or Koevoet, they have brutally terrorized, murdered, detained and tortured thousands of Namibians. This has been documented by Amnesty International and other respected human rights organizations. Churches, schools and hospitals have been attacked. Northern Namibia, where over half the population lives, is designated an “operational zone” with a dusk-to-dawn curfew. South Africa is spending more than $1 million a day to maintain its economic and military domination of Namibia.

Refugee victims of South African aggression.
NAMIBIAN RESISTANCE

Namibians have long resisted the occupation of their country. SWAPO, the South-West Africa Peoples Organization, was formed in April 1960 to oppose colonial rule and to struggle for Namibia's independence from South Africa. SWAPO's early non-violent political campaigns were met with violent repression. SWAPO was forced to resort to armed struggle against South African occupation in 1966.

SWAPO, whose president is Sam Nujoma, is supported by the vast majority of Namibians and is internationally recognized as the sole, legitimate and authentic representative of the Namibian people. Most observers agree that if free and fair elections were held tomorrow, SWAPO would win an overwhelming majority—even some South African officials concede this fact.

However, SWAPO is prevented from forming a government by South Africa's military occupation, its refusal to implement UN Resolution 435 (see below), and Pretoria's installation of undemocratic, unpopular and ineffective puppet "governments" [such as the Multi Party Conference (MPC), installed in June 1985] which remain wholly subservient to racist Pretoria.

THE U.S. HAS HELPED BLOCK NAMIBIA'S INDEPENDENCE

United States policy toward South Africa and Namibia is based on the premise that the principal threat to peace and U.S. interests in the region is communism and the Soviet Union, rather than the racist apartheid system. Therefore, the U.S. has been allied with South Africa and its policy of continued occupation of Namibia. The U.S., along with South Africa, has raked the withdrawal of Cuban troops from neighboring Angola a precondition for any movement toward Namibian independence.

South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia predates by several years the arrival of Cuban troops in Angola in 1975 to help repulse a South African invasion of that country. As a sovereign nation, Angola is fully entitled to request such assistance under Article 51 of the UN Charter which recognizes "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence" of a country under armed attack. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) supports Angola's position and rejects the negative use of linkage by the United States. This "linkage" issue is just another artificially created obstacle to block the freedom of Namibians. The Anglican Bishop of Namibia, James Kauluma, said that, "The U.S. and South Africa are insisting on linkage because they have run out of arguments for South Africa to stay in Namibia." U.S. military aid to a South African-backed rebel group called the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which is fighting to overthrow the government of Angola, also supports the continued South African domination of Namibia. South Africa launches attacks in support of UNITA from Namibian territory as well as strikes against other nations in the region.

United Nations Resolution 435, adopted in 1978, is accepted internationally and by the people of Namibia, as the basis for Namibian independence. It provides for the withdrawal of all combat troops, free and fair elections under UN supervision, and a constitutional convention elected by universal franchise. As long as the United States delays Namibian independence, Namibians, like Bishop Duomeni, will view the U.S. and South Africa together as their colonizers.

The U.S. should support the immediate implementation of Resolution 435, and pressure South Africa to withdraw from Namibia.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

- Organize a community conference, workshop or forum on Namibia.
- Show a film or slide show. Many of these are available from: Lutheran World Ministries, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010.
- Invite speakers who have knowledge of Namibia's struggle, including representatives of SWAPO.
- Utilize the media by arranging to appear on radio and TV talk shows.
- Keep in touch with your members of Congress to inform them about Namibia's plight, urging them to take action and to explore ways to develop a supportive U.S. policy for Namibia's independence.
- Refuse to buy South African and Namibian-made goods.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED CONTACT THE:

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