TO: FRIENDS OF NAMIBIA

FROM: JOHN EVENSON, Namibia Advocacy Coordinator, Lutheran Church in America

SPECIAL ALERT ISSUE..... June 18, 1982

Attached is important material from Namibia that deserves your attention.

In recent months church observers from the British Council of Churches, the South African Council of Churches and the South Africa Catholic Bishops Conference have reported on atrocities committed by the South African Army in its illegal occupation of Namibia.

Official South African response has been to taunt the church for its inability to produce witnesses to these events. (See clipping from Windhoek Advertiser, 3/2/82)

In the accompanying report, Bishop Kleopas Dumeni of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church has responded to South Africa and presented himself as a witness. It is the latest in a history of courageous acts by this man of God.

His report shows the disdain of South Africa for the Namibia people and for Christ's church. It is a witness of brutality and evil.

The leaders of the Lutheran Church in America, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the American Lutheran Church have issued a statement on the report. (See attached)

Is this not a time for you also to advocate for justice in Namibia and for the safety of Bishop Dumeni?

Pray for peace in Namibia, that God will stay the hands of violence. Pray for justice in Namibia that the chains of apartheid will be broken.

Write to your member of Congress reminding them of our nation's involvement in support of South Africa's economy and government. Ask them to support implementation of an unaltered U.N. Security Council Resolution 435 so that Namibia may be free.

Write to the South African Ambassador in the U.S. You may want to remind him of our love and concern for the Namibian Christians, especially Bishop Dumeni. You may want to say that Christians in North America are watching the actions of South Africa very closely, especially in regard to the church and its leaders.

Is this not the time for you to become involved?

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Mr. B. G. Fourie
South African Embassy
3051 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
202-232-4400
A Report about the visitation at ELOMBE Parish, 48km from Ondangwa in the Eastern part of Ondonga. The Sunday Service of the mentioned visit by Bishop Kleopas Dumeni of ELOC on May 16, 1982 was disturbed and interrupted by the South African Defence Forces. Bishop K. Dumeni reported:

Upon the decision of ELOC's Church Council the dates 14-16.5.1982 were earmarked for the episcopal visitation of the said parish by the bishop and his entourage composed of Bishop Kleopas Dumeni himself and five clergymen to his assistance. During the first two days i.e. 14-15.5.82, the visitation proceeded in peace. The visitors met with the elders as well as with all the parish-workers in that particular parish.

On Sunday the 16th May it was time to meet the whole congregation. We started with the Worship Service at 10.30a.m. I myself and two pastors, namely, Titus Ngula and Vaino S. Nambala conducted a special service for the children under a tree, while the other four pastors, Festus Ashipala (Area Dean), Petrus Shipena (ELOC's General Secretary), Josef Kapewangolo and Markus Amushila (the local pastor) conducted the worship service in the Church, for the adult people. Just as we were finishing the Children Service, while that of the adults was still going on, there arrived two army trucks without registration numbers on them, arrived on the spot. The soldiers immediately surrounded the church-building at that juncture, I myself and the other two pastors were just leaving the place where the children worship service was held. We went straight to a group of soldiers who had taken position at the entrance of the church. I was of the intention to go and talk to their commander in order to request him whether they could retreat back a little within striking distance from the church and wait there untill the service is over.

I greeted them in Afrikaans, "Goeie môre" (Good morning). "Môre" (morning), they answered. "Who is your Chief? I want to talk to him." One of them said "Dis ek" (It's me). Another one again retorted, "Praat maar ons hoor" (Just speak, we are listening). Then I said: "I plead, with you, could you please retreat to a distance from the church for a while. For we are busy with the worship service and the people are so scared to see you surrounding the Church like that.
The commander's answer was: "We are following the footprints of Swapo. Why are the people afraid? We are at war, and we are fighting for you. I have seven brothers killed by Swapo." He spoke angrily and ordered me to shut up immediately. I answered: "You are representing a government which claims to be a subscriber to the principles of the freedom of religion. Therefore it will be better if you can let us continue with our service in peace." He then retorted: "Go into the church right now!" "ek moer jou, jou kak" (you shit) I can shoot all these people dead. It is the Owambo Government which has given me the order to do that." Many other harsh words and scorings followed up.

My request: "I have already requested you that we cannot continue with our worship service while you are surrounding us. You may rather, if you so wish, carry on with your program first, and after you have finished, we can then continue with our service.

One of the soldiers, then commanded right away all the people to leave the church. He then ordered the soldiers to shoot anyone who tries to run away or who refuses to leave the church. "Get out of the church all of you! People are ready to shoot, if you don't get out immediately" shouted one of the soldiers. In a state of great shock and terror struck, the congregation had to vacate the church abruptly. Some people went out through the windows, despite the effort of the Dean who was doing his best to calm the people just to leave peacefully. They used any chance they could to get out of the church. The assembled congregation was estimated to be approximately 600–700 people in total. While the whole congregation was surrounded by the army, the commander approached me very close and said: "You who has a white robe on and all your colleagues with black garments, should leave this place immediately. Go to that white house over there!" We were badly scorned at and intimidated. All pastors were then chased away from the church-building and from their parishioners as well.

What next: The soldiers checked out all women and children and ordered them to sit down at a separate place. All men were assembled at the main entrance of the church. They were then taken by the soldiers one by one in order to be interrogated and beaten. Some of the women started to cry, when they saw that the men were really badly beaten. The soldiers then ordered the men to move further behind the walls of the church-building. They too were also beaten and kicked with boots. All these things were done before our very eyes. All lasted for about an hour, i.e. from 11.35–12.35 a.m. Some of the people were so badly
hurt that they were unable to continue with the worship service after this mishap.

After they have finished beating up people, the soldiers left. Even though some of the parishioners were obliged to go home on account of injuries, most of them were fortunately able and ready to continue. As such we could continue with our worship service and the programme of our visitation as planned, afterwards.

This very day 16th May was quite recently earmarked by the Church Council to be a thanksgiving day to God on account of the good rain and the good harvest which we have got this year. Furthermore, the day was assigned to be a day of prayer to God in behalf of the political situation in our country which has not yet improved whatsoever. The assembled congregation then knelt down and thanked God for all his Goodness, even prayed Him in behalf of the war-situation. In their prayers the parishioners even prayed for those soldier who tortured them. "Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they are doing."

"For the past two and a half hours, the soldiers returned back as the congregation was just busy leaving the church. They did not cause anymore trouble, but they just passed by.

**Result:** In spite of the fact that the worship service was disturbed, interrupted and men were tortured, the soldiers left without catching Swapo whom they reportedly were looking for inside the church.

According to the report I received from Onayena, this very same thing also took place at the Onayena Parish, approximately 15km from Elombe, on the same day at about 1.00 o'clock p.m. The report said: On Sunday, May 16, 1982 around 1.00 a.m. soon after Sunday service, two unregistered army carriers full of soldiers (most of them whites) to its capacity approached Onayena Parish building and halt about five meters from the church's main entrance. A civilian car full of passengers which was on its way to the parish grave yard for a funeral was also standing there ready to move on. Immediately the soldiers jumped off from their trucks, surrounded the car and commanded the civilians to get out of the car while some of them pulling out the driver by barrel of the gun. All passengers were brutally beaten up - two of them half dead. The two were taken for hospitalization.
Two watches of the beaten up civilians were snatched from them by force. One of the soldiers is known as David Namhinga. The pastor tried to find out the reason but no reason was given why this should happen.

I was left with the following big questions:

1. Why is it so that the South African government which claims to be a Christian government and subscribes to the principles of the freedom of religion does have such soldiers who have no respect of honour with regard to the holiness of the worship service? Why do they have come and beat up people right at the entrance of the church?

2. Why are pastors being chased away from their parishioners and from church so that the soldiers could torture the people?

3. Why has the Owambo Government to authorize the South African Soldiers to come and beat up people right at the church and to disturb and interrupt their worship service?

4. For one to say that: "I can shoot all these people dead", What crime did all those people commit?

5. My understanding: As far as I am concerned, I do view these actions not as something directed against an individual, but rather an affront to God Himself and to His work as well.

Closing remarks: This report is nothing else but the truth—and the whole of it. It does not cover everything that was said by the soldiers. In deed, it is a very abridged report. The Elombe parish is an eyewitness The six pastors who were with me are witnesses too. I endorse it with my own signature.

Bishop of ELOC

c.c. This Report is sent to:


2. Brigadier Badenhost.

3. The A.G. of S.W.A/NAMIBIA (for his information)
STATEMENT BY U.S. LUTHERAN CHURCH BODY PRESIDENTS
ON ASSAULT BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE AGAINST
CONGREGATIONS OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN OVAMBOKAVANGO CHURCH

From an eye witness account of the Rt. Rev. Kleopas Dumeni, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church we have learned that on 16 May 1982 at the time of divine services, many members of his congregations were brutally assaulted by the South African Defense Force at Elombe and Onayena in the northeastern section of Namibia. Many sustained injuries; no one was killed.

We know Bishop Dumeni personally and respect him as a person of integrity, courage, wisdom and faith. We share his indignation and dismay because of these events and join in his challenge to South African government authorities to answer the many questions raised by the unprovoked actions of their army personnel, and we shall observe carefully the response of that government to our brother's charges.

We continue to call on the governments of the United States and Canada to use their considerable influence on the South African government to bring about a speedy implementation of an unaltered UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) so that the people of Namibia may determine their own future and under the blessing of God experience justice, liberty and peace.

Finally, we urge our members to make their convictions known to their representatives in the Congress of the United States and the Parliament of Canada in the Namibian issue.

$ James R. Crumley, President
Lutheran Church in America

$ William H. Kohn, President
Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

$ David W. Preus, President
American Lutheran Church
Every atrocity will be investigated — Lloyd

STAFF REPORTER

DEFENCE FORCE Chief, Major General Charles Lloyd vowed yesterday to have every reported allegation of Defence Force brutality investigated and where necessary have those responsible brought to justice.

This follows numerous reports from the north that such atrocities have taken place.

General Lloyd was addressing a meeting of local newspaper and radio editors.

General Lloyd, said it was part of the enemy's strategy to discredit the Security Forces but by the same token he was not prepared to hide from the truth.

"I am prepared to have each and every atrocity committed against the local people and reported to the authorities investigated", he said.

"I am very much against atrocities committed by members of the Defence Force and I will undertake to have each and every one investigated. It is not our policy to condone such acts.

NECESSARY STEPS

"The soldiers are here for the protection of the people, not to act against them. Anybody who has complaints should not hesitate to see the given military commander in the area and in the case of Ovambo, Brig Badenhorst in Oshakati."

General Lloyd conceded that certain crimes have been committed and in each reported case the legal process had been taken to its logical conclusion.

He said the cooperation of the local people was extremely important to the Defence Force and as such the Defence Force placed a high premium on its goodwill to the populace.

On Saturday Ovambo Government Executive Chairman Peter Kalangula announced that a standing committee consisting of members of his government and the Defence Force was to be set up to handle complaints of the aforementioned nature.

This was confirmed yesterday by General Lloyd.

DENIAL

Meanwhile the SADF has strongly denied allegations by the President of the SA Council of Churches, the Reverend Peter Storey, that 90 percent of the atrocities in the Operational Area were committed by the SADF.

A spokesman for the SADF said in a statement in Pretoria the allegations were made by Mr Storey after a visit to Ovambo last week.

He said the allegations included statements that the local Ovambo population was suffering at the hands of the SA armed forces, that the Lutheran Bishop of Ovambo had documented every case, that every military victory by the SADF was a political victory for Swapo and that every base demolished by the SADF resulted in Namibians saying the Security Forces had killed their brothers and sisters and this led to more recruits for Swapo.

The spokesman said in his statement:

"It is obvious that the Reverend Peter Storey and the SWA churchmen with whom he had discussions, have either been misled by the stream of twisted propaganda emanating from that sinister tool of Russian expansionism, Swapo, or are in cahoots with this marxist organisation.

WILD CLAIMS

"Unable to show results in SWA — Swapo lost nearly 2,000 terrorists last year, yet cannot claim one square centimetre of SWA soil — they are now trying to whip up feelings with wild and unsubstantiated claims of atrocities which are willingly promulgated by their sympathisers.

The SADF is in SWA at the request of the citizens of that country to protect them against marauding bands of terrorists who are nothing but murderers, robbers and rapists.

"It is unthinkable that the disciplined South African soldiers will ill-treat the very people they are supposed to protect and on whose support they rely in their struggle against these thugs and bandits.

COME FORWARD

"But, if the Lutheran Bishop of Ovambo or any other church leader has factual evidence about atrocities, he should, if he is sincere, come forward with his evidence so that those accused of having committed atrocities can be charged in a court of law.

"It is strange that these sanctimonious churchmen have never bothered to collect evidence of the ghastly actions. Like the cold-blooded murder of a headman in front of his beloved ones, committed by Swapo in the cause of freedom for these people", the spokesman said.

He added the Chaplain General of the SADF, Major-General J A van Zyl, had reiterated his challenge to church leaders, including Mr Storey, to come forward with their "so-called evidence" otherwise their allegations could be "dismissed as merely hollow words devoid of all truth. — Sapa."