LUTHERAN PASTOR AND FAMILY ARRESTED IN NAMIBIA BY SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES

Windhoek, May 28. Pastor Asser Lihongo, dean of the Kavango District of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church, was arrested by South African forces on May 4, according to reports from the church headquarters at Oniipa, Namibia.

Pastor Lihongo's detention was followed on May 11 by the arrest of his 22 year-old daughter, Tuovi, and by the arrest on May 17 of his wife Elina. It is assumed that the Lihongo family are being held under South African security laws. Church officials report that they do not know where the Lihongo family is imprisoned nor have any charges against them been made known.

The Kavango area of Namibia has experienced increased repression by the South African occupying forces since 1982. Numerous reports of arrests, beatings and deaths under detention have reached both church and human rights agencies from this eastern area of northern Namibia. The area is very remote and sparsely settled, except for the many villages along the Okavango River on the Angolan border.

Pastor Lihongo, who is in the early fifties, reported in 1983 to church officials that the Christians in his district were being threatened by the authorities and told not to attend the Lutheran church services. "The government complains that politics is being preached in the church," said Lihongo. But Pastor Lihongo continued to urge the people to "come to the church services, come to listen to God's words, because God did not give us the spirit of fear."

Editor's note: Under South African law, any person can be detained without being charged of a crime if a ranking police or army officer suspects that the person is or may be a 'security risk.' Many church officials and laypersons have been accused of being 'communists' and security risks by the South Africans because they preach openly against the racist laws and practices of the South African government. While in detention, persons lose virtually all human and legal rights and are not permitted to see either a lawyer or even members of their family.

The church in Namibia is praying for the safety and deliverence of the Lihongo family. You can join them in prayer for Asser, Elina and Tuovi Lihongo in your private and family devotions. You can also protest their arrest and the continued occupation of Namibia by South Africa by writing to the South African Administrator General of South West Africa/Namibia.

Write: Dr. Willem van Niekerk, Administrator General
Private Bag 13278, Windhoek, 9000 South West Africa/Namibia

Copy: Pastor Asser Lihongo c/o Bishop Kleopas Dumeni
Oniipa Private Bag 2018, Ondongwa 9000 South West Africa/Namibia

Your Senator, Representative or Member of Parliament.
New York, May 28. (Compiled from sources in Lusaka, Zambia and Windhoek, Namibia)

May 11 was to have been a joyous and historic day for the Namibian people, a day for the realization of hopes and prayers for peace, justice and freedom. On that day, in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, representatives of South Africa and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) began new talks aimed at ending South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. At least one of the parties, SWAPO, expected that the talks would lead to a genuine independence under the international blueprint known as United Nations Security Council Resolution 435.

There were reasons for optimism. South Africa and Angola had agreed to a cease-fire between their forces in February of this year, and South Africa had announced it was finally ending its two-year occupation of southern Angola, near the Namibian border—a prelude, some said, to a cease-fire and withdrawal from Namibia itself. Moreover, South Africa was said to be tiring of the seemingly endless war in the north of Namibia and frustrated at the inability of its hand-picked political allies in Namibia, the Multi-Party Conference, to weaken the strong popular support in Namibia for SWAPO. South Africa, it was whispered, had finally decided to settle.

It was not to be. After three fruitless days, the Lusaka conference collapsed—dashed against the rocks of South African intransigence and the unwillingness of the South African backed political parties to put their popularity to the test in free elections.

In his opening address to the conference, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma strongly proposed "that the delegations of South Africa and SWAPO gathered here, resolve to ask the UN Secretary General to initiate, as a matter of utmost urgency, the implementation of Resolution 435, starting with the cease-fire arrangements."

In a section of his speech some felt was directed primarily at the whites present, Mr. Nujoma said that the new Namibia would be based "on principles of racial equality and tolerance." "In this society human rights, property rights and civil liberties of all Namibians will be protected and guaranteed under the law," Mr. Nujoma said.

In contrast, Dr. Willie van Niekerk, describing the Lusaka talks as a 'debate,' made it clear that the talks were not to be the venue for the signing of a cease-fire and the implementation of 435. Quoting Prime Minister Botha, van Niekerk went on to say that the issue of the Cubans in Angola was still an obstacle to Namibian independence. Reports indicate that van Niekerk implied that the talks should be between the Multi-Party Conference and SWAPO rather than SWAPO and South Africa.

Instead of peace, there is now a feeling on the part of observers in Namibia that South Africa hopes to jettison UN 435 and with it the promise of free elections—and impose upon Namibia a government of its own choosing.

In his opening address, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda spoke of the need for unity among Namibians of all parties. He called on the Multi-Party Conference to join SWAPO Africa and the international community in demanding the immediate implementation of Resolution 435.

The Multi-Party Conference representative refused to respond to this call, and instead raised one objection after another to the size and composition of the SWAPO delegation.
NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE TALKS FAIL AGAIN (continued)

According to press reports, a chief spokesman for the MPC, Mr. Moses Katjiuongua, was particularly disturbed at the sight of delegations of former MPC members now sitting at the SWAPO table, including dissident members of his own party SWANU. In fact the SWAPO delegation included representatives from many smaller parties who have now aligned with SWAPO in a 'patriotic front.'

In an effort to salvage the talks, SWAPO agreed to remove the non-SWAPO members from its delegation and Nujoma again offered to sign a ceasefire between SWAPO and South Africa as the first step in putting the UN plan into motion. South Africa again refused, demanding instead that Cuban troops in Angola be withdrawn as a part of a Namibian settlement. Since Angola and almost every other country in the world has rejected this 'linkage' as unrelated to the illegal occupation of Namibia and a violation of Angolan sovereignty, South Africa's demand effectively ended any hope for a successful outcome to the Lusaka meeting.

The meeting ended without the parties able to agree on a joint resolution or a meeting date for a future conference. Said one Namibian journalist in Lusaka, "In terms of finding a settlement to the Namibia problem the talks were an utter and hopeless failure."

What then is next? South Africa claims that the inclusion of the Multi-Party Conference in the talks proves their legitimacy. Mr. Even van Zijl, a leader of the MPC with close ties to South Africa's ruling National Party, has said that an appointed "government of national unity" is an alternative to the democratic elections envisaged by UN 435.

Church leaders present at the conference were severely disappointed at the lack of movement towards a cease-fire. They were pleased at the response of the different liberation groups towards SWAPO's call for a 'patriotic front' and found the interaction between the groups united with SWAPO as very encouraging for a future Namibia.

But inside Namibia most news reports on the conference gave a South African-Multi-Party Conference interpretation. The only newspaper to issue a full report of the meeting, The Windhoek Observer, was banned from publication by the South African government.

STEWARDSHIP SECRETARY'S HOME ATTACKED, SON BEATEN

Oniipa, May 23. Soldiers of the South West Africa Territorial Force attacked the home of Pastor Matias Ngipandulua of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church on May 15. The territorial force, set up by South Africa to assist in the control of the civilian population of Namibia, has a history of continual harassment of the people in Ovamboland. Pastor Ngipandulua was not at home at the time, but his 18 year-old son was severely beaten by the soldiers and required subsequent hospital treatment.

The Ngipandulua home is about two miles west of Oniipa, the headquarters of ELOC. Reports indicate that the house was ransacked and 560 Rand (about US$ 450) was stolen by the soldiers. While this kind of official brutality is commonplace in northern Namibia, it goes largely unreported in the press inside Namibia and overseas. When a church official is subject to this treatment, the news travels more quickly.
Windhoek, May 28. Dr. Zephaniah Kameeta, Vice-President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA/Namibia, said today that the churches of Namibia "still stand firm and demand the immediate implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435" as the most just avenue for Namibian independence. There has been speculation that the United Nations plan would be pushed aside by South Africa and even its authors, the Western Contact Group (the United States, Great Britain, Canada, France and West Germany) in favor of a plan more amenable to South Africa and its so-called 'internal parties' in Namibia.

But this was rejected by Dr. Kameeta. "If you talk with the Namibian on the street," said Kameeta, "if you talk to the churches or to the political parties that have joined with the South West Africa People's Organization in confronting South Africa, you find all want an immediate implementation of UN 435."

Talk about abandoning UN 435 is only heard from the side of those who are "chosen by South Africa," said Kameeta. "As for the churches, UN 435 is still basic. We see nothing better for our independence."

UN 435 is a common shorthand designation for United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, passed unanimously by the Security Council when it was presented by the five western nations in 1978. Much of the diplomatic effort of the world community and particularly the United States in the last six years has been to bring South Africa to the point where it would agree to implement this resolution. UN 435 basically involves the signing of a cease-fire between South Africa and SWAPO; the introduction of a United Nations peacekeeping force to monitor the cease-fire and the gradual withdrawal of South African occupying forces; and the holding of nationwide elections to determine the representatives who will write a constitution for an independent Namibia.

The election process would be arranged and staffed by South African administrators and police, but would be monitored and supervised by United Nations personnel. It is this proviso that proved to be the most difficult for South Africa. But, finally last year South Africa agreed to all the conditions of UN 435 but added a new one of its own, that Cuban troops more than 350 miles north of Namibia in Angola must leave before implementation could begin. SWAPO has repeatedly said that it would accept UN 435 unconditionally and sign a cease-fire any time and at any place designated by South Africa.

Talk of abandoning UN 435 is anathema to the churches in Namibia. They believe that United Nations supervised elections is the best guarantee to a democratic process, even with South Africa printing the ballots and staffing the polling places.

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