TESTAMENT
OF A
NAMIBIAN WOMAN
RAUNA NAMBINIA

At the Second Session of the
International Commission of Inquiry
into the Crimes of the
Racist and Apartheid Regimes
in Southern Africa

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—For A Free Southern Africa—
Rauna Nambinga just after her flight from Namibia

SWAPO photo
SWORN STATEMENT by
RAUNA NAMBINGA

I was born on the 15th of May 1950, at Okadiva, Northern Namibia, and I am a nurse by profession. My social status: I am not married.

I was arrested first on the 17th of September, 1975, at Engela Hospital where I was working. I was arrested by the C.I.D. police and they took me immediately to Ogongo Detention Camp. I slept in the police van the first night with my arms tightened behind my back till the following morning, then in the morning I was unloosed and taken to the office for the first interrogation. In the office I found a group of military police and the C.I.D.s who brought me. They started asking me if we give medicine and kidney to the freedom fighters of SWAPO. I told them that we never give anything to the freedom fighters. They started beating me; some used their hands, some with the butts of their guns, and the beating went on for more than one hour. Then after that beating I was taken outside to be exposed in the sun. It was very, very hot and I had to stand there outside, guarded by three soldiers who changed after every four hours.

The whole period I was standing there I was given only a glass of milk to drink while standing there. In the evening then I was taken inside into the office, ordered to stand in the corner and not to sit or try to do anything but just to stand for the whole night. Sometimes when I complained that I was tired and wanted to sit they took a rope and tightened my arms around my back and hung me against the roof, and that went on as long as they wished, sometimes up to three hours, hanging. When I asked to go to the toilet I was told that I had to agree first that we give money and medicine to freedom.
fighters, only then could I be allowed to go to the toilet, and this went on for seven days, so I could not help it - sometimes I had to urinate wherever I was. When it was inside the office then I was punished by having to clean the whole office after that, and they put sand in my mouth and during the night they poured very cold water on me as a punishment for having urinated, before I agreed that we give help to the freedom fighters.

On the 24th of September, 1975, I was taken to Ondangwa prison. When I arrived there I was put in a cell alone and there was nothing in that cell except one old blanket and one small bucket which served as my toilet. I remained in that cell until the first week of November. I was called once or twice per week to the office for further interrogation and each time I was beaten and forced to agree that we do help the freedom fighters. And there at Ondangwa I was told that they have all the information about me and the money we gave to the freedom fighters who are outside Namibia and those who are operating inside the country, and if I was not going to agree then they would show me that they are stronger than us.

The kind of food I was given was unbelievably bad for a human being: this was once a day a maize flour put in cold water with too much salt so that when I ate it my stomach would start running, and in most cases it happened that I couldn't get the food because the way which the plate was thrown in the cell was so rushed that when the plate touched the ground the porridge was already all over the floor. This could happen for two or three days and as a result I had nothing to eat for those days.

The police asked me to tell them about the people who killed a puppet, a so-called Minister of Ovambo homeland, Fililemon Elifas, in August 1975. I answered that I did not know them and the police said that I was hid-
ing the information because I was also one of them and if I continued doing that I would never be freed. At Ogongo the day I remember as the most terrible one was when I was taken to a small room and in that room there were many pictures of dead people on the wall. They told me one of those people was my brother, Usko Nambinga, so I must show them which one was likely to be his. I said I didn't know, then they told me that they were hundred per cent sure that among those corpses, one was my brother's. There I was beaten almost after every question until the whole of my body was in extreme pain and my body was swollen so that even with a soft touch I could always feel pain.

From there I was taken to another room where there were snakes. I was told that if I was not going to agree and start telling the truth, I was going to be bitten by those snakes. I continued saying that I didn't know, then one man came with plastic gloves on both hands and fetched one snake and came with it towards me. I was in great panic but I was ordered not to make any funny move, then the man with the snake came just close to me and placed the head of the snake on my left ear. Then I felt pain which I could not tell exactly, whether it was the snake biting me then, or some instrument used on my body. And the other police continued with questions, saying that I must tell them about the help we give to the freedom fighters; failing to do that, I would die.

I spent more than four hours in that snake room and when I was taken out I immediately fell down unconscious, but I was pulled up to the office and the police continued to order me to stand on my feet. I tried my level best, but my whole body was almost paralysed and I could not see or make out the different people or whatever was in front of me.
I was in that situation until the day I was taken to Ondangwa prison.

From Ondangwa I was transferred to Windhoek Central Prison, where I was kept in solitary confinement for the whole of November, until the first of December, when the police started again with their interrogation. They repeated almost the same questions I was asked at Ogongo and Ondangwa, but the only difference was that I was not beaten during the interrogation. But I was being threatened with words such as, you will die in prison if you are not going to tell us the truth. I continued saying that I didn't know anything, but they sometimes laughed and continued with all kinds of threats.

In Windhoek Prison I was not given food sometimes for two or three days. The same applied to drinking water, and I was told that water for washing was not in the system of the Windhoek Prison, so I must stop asking them for water to wash myself. But sometimes when a kind policeman happened to be on duty that day, then he gave me water to wash my body. This happened sometimes after two weeks, until when I was transferred on the 9th of February to Swakopmund to stand trial there.

The trial started on the 13th of February. The first day of the trial I was asked by the judge whether I was a member of SWAPO and when I joined SWAPO, where and why. I told the judge that I joined SWAPO in 1973 at Engela, Northern Namibia. The reason why is because SWAPO is fighting for the interest of our people and the liberation of our country. The judge asked me to tell the court, since I was a member of SWAPO, why people were leaving the country. I answered that they were subjected to live by the South African Government. Then the judge told me that they had evidence that I had connections with the people outside to whom we had given money and other assistance. I said, yes, it's true that we gave money to people who are now outside Namibia but that money is to help the Namibian refugees who are in desperate
need of assistance. The judge told me that I was now accused of assisting people who want to come back to Namibia with the aim of overthrowing the government by force.

The 12th of May, 1976, was the last day of my trial and this was the day I was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment. That very day I was transferred back to Windhoek Prison, where I was kept until the 16th of July, then taken to South Africa at the place called Kroonstad where I served my sentence until the 13th of March, 1977. Our work in Kroonstad as prisoners was mostly gardening, washing and ironing, cleaning of buildings, etc. After my release from Kroonstad I came back to Namibia. I went home and rested for a while before I started my work at the hospital.

I was arrested again on the 15th of July, 1980, by the military police of the South African army. I was taken to Oshakati Prison where I was interrogated again. They asked me to tell them about the assistance we give to the freedom fighters who are reported to be around our area. If I did not do it myself, at least I must tell them anybody I knew who has done it, and at least I must tell the truth. This was the 16th of July; then on the 17th of July I was called back to the office and asked the same question. I gave the same answer. Then a black policeman came with a rope, tied my arms behind my back and blindfolded me, then electricity was attached to the little fingers of both my hands. It was switched on and off and I screamed.

They said they were not going to disconnect me from the electrical instrument. To avoid the noise I was making when I screamed, they put cotton wool into my mouth and covered my mouth with a cloth so I could not breathe properly. They kept on switching the instrument on and off. I felt all the agony, the
pain until I was no longer myself. This started from eight in the morning until two o'clock. The following morning I was again called to the office. They started the same routine, with the same questions. This time no time was wasted; they immediately blindfolded me and applied an instrument to my head which inflicted an electrical shock on me and after this my arms were tied up and I was pulled to hang from the roof for more than three hours; then after that I was taken to the cell.

The following morning again I was brought to a small room then a rope was tied around my neck and pulled. I fell down unconscious. Then when I woke up I was in a pool of blood and realised that I had broken my jaw and blood was running. I asked for a doctor but I was told I was not going to be given one until I told the truth. From there I was taken to a different cell where I was kept with a 19-year-old girl, Ndilimeke Namweya. When the police came the following morning I could not move any part of my body and the girl told them that I was not feeling well, that I needed a doctor immediately. The policeman went to call his superiors then came back together with the commander of the police, who said that I was just pretending.

He ordered the police to beat me until I stood up. They kept on beating me but I could not move my body. Then I was taken to a military hospital which was on the nearest military base. I was examined immediately by the doctor and he told me that I was seriously injured in my head and my ear drum had burst, and my left kidney was seriously injured, so he gave me tablets to take immediately there, and some to take with me. Upon our arrival, the two policemen who took me to the hospital ordered me to surrender my tablets to them. They told me that they would give me my tablets whenever I needed them, but this was not the case. I asked for
the tablets and I was told I was not going to be
given any tablets, so I remained in bed for four
days, with the help of the girl to turn me when I
wanted to turn. The fifth day I was called to the
office, put back to the electrical torture again
and asked the same questions. This time I was
tortured from eight o'clock in the morning until
12 noon, then in the afternoon I was taken back to
the office and a small chain that looked like a
necklace was put around my neck. My whole neck
started itching so terribly that I thought it was
going to be cut off. This went on until after
three o'clock in the afternoon, then I was sent
back to my cell just to be collected the follow­
ing morning.

Upon entering the office one policeman told me,
do you know that you are in trouble up to your
neck? Then they started with their electrical
instruments; this time it was administered to my
breasts. It went on for almost three hours. Af­
ter that I was ordered to stand without making
any movement.

On the 17th of October, 1980, I was taken to
Oshakati military base where I was given a
tent alone and I was told not to talk to any­
body there. One day in the afternoon, a white
officer came to my tent. He ordered me to do
whatever he told me. He ordered me to take
off my clothes and said that he was a doctor,
that I should not be afraid, he was only going
to examine my health. But I saw the contrary
when he started taking off his clothes also
and put a small blanket on the ground and he
grabbed me towards him and told me that if I
screamed he would shoot me. But, I said, I
cannot do this, and I screamed loudly. Then
two other officers came; they found us in the
same position, but he told them that I had a
mental disorder and this should not be known
by anybody. The other officers told me to
put on my clothes and not to tell anybody at
all.
On the 23rd of October, 1980, at four o'clock in the afternoon, I was taken by a truck to an unknown destination. On the truck I was blindfolded, then, on top of that, I was covered with a blanket so that I should not know even the direction in which we were heading. But I imagined I could see that we were going towards the south and we went up to a distance that could be between Tsumeb and Otavi. We went out of the main road on the right hand side, until we reached a prison which is somewhere in the forest. There I was put in a cell alone. The building was made of iron sheets. The cell was very small but we were ordered that even when inside the cell we must not remove the blankets. I was found one morning without that blanket by a policeman who came into my cell, then he told me that I had committed a serious crime because I was not allowed to see anything in that place, let alone to see people with my eyes. I told him that these rules were not introduced to us upon our arrival, so I didn't know anything about that. Then I was tied up again as punishment, this time hanging and my head facing the ground, and I was beaten and warned not to remove that blanket again from my head for the whole one month and two weeks.

I was given water only two times to wash my body, but I was subjected to beating almost every morning and afternoon, until the 10th of November, when I was taken out. When we reached Usakos, the blanket was then removed from my head, then I could see where I was. From there I was told to forget about going back home. I was told that we were going to Walvis Bay. I was informed by the police who brought me there that I was to go to work in the hospital at Swakopmund. Then they changed their minds; after that they said they had found better work for me and not in the hospital, but in the supermarket called Woerman & Brock.
Then I was taken by three policemen, two whites and one black, and they gave me a letter to take to that company, to a man called Gerhardt. When I arrived there I gave the letter to Gerhardt, and I saw in the letter that there was nothing written, only one sentence which read: "That is the person." Gerhardt gave me one black girl who worked there and said that she would show me the work. I started working there on the 21st of November, and all the time the police from Walvis Bay came to see whether I was still working there. I remember the name of one C.I.D. policeman called Hendrickson, who came on the second week of December. Then after that three policemen came and called me to go with them. We drove out of town to a thick forest, then they stopped the car. They started asking me if I could tell the truth now about the questions I had been asked when I was in prison and detention camps.

I told them that I had nothing to say. Then they asked if I could work with them. I told them that I had to think about that since the whole idea came as a surprise to me. Then the black policeman said that I must stop being cheeky and cooperate with them. I asked them to give me their names, but they refused. Then I asked them, how am I going to work with you if you can't tell me your names? Then one of them decided to tell me only his first name, that he was Jan, and he gave me his telephone number to contact him whenever I wanted. The phone number was 0642-2927 Walvis Bay. They took me back to Swakopmund. This time I was afraid of all these developments. I decided on the 24th of December to run away from Swakopmund and found my way to the north so that I could get out of the country to save my life.

END

This Statement was taken in the Department of Legal Affairs of SWAPO, Luanda.
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