Extracts of Statement, COUNCIL of CHURCHES in NAMIBIA, Human Rights Day, 10 December 1984

"...Our particular concern at this time is the recent announcement of a general requirement in terms of the Defence Act, for all males between the ages of 17 and 55 years, to register with the military authorities.

"In 1980, at the time of the introduction of compulsory military service in Namibia, the member churches of the Council of Churches, addressed a letter to the State President of South Africa in which they said:

"...In view of the nature of the opposing factions involved in the present guerrilla war, the enlistment of SWA/Namibia nationals for compulsory military service would result in that war becoming a civil war." Further, the letter went on to say:

"...The introduction of compulsory service at this stage of settlement negotiations could be interpreted as being in direct conflict with and as a block to the much desired settlement through the medium of unsupervised elections."

"These two quotations still form a basic part of the belief of the Council of Churches today, though our concern is now further heightened by this new proclamation. Not only does it bring the prospect of a civil war situation closer but, in the present circumstances it also casts doubt upon the good faith of negotiations now taking place.

"In this hour of negotiations towards a settlement the South African Minister of Defence has no right to legislate this defence law which is causing confusion and polarization.

"In the first place, political divisions between Namibians imposed by the South African regime in this country are further increased. Peace and reconciliation, which is based on true justice - surely a matter of the deepest concern for today - is being sabotaged by this illegal legislation. Secondly, for those whose conscience forbids them to register - either for deep religious or political considerations - there is already a conflict situation and, in some deplorable cases, people have lost their jobs as a consequence of refusing. We express our strongest sympathy and firm support for those who refuse to register, on the grounds of conscience and love for justice, freedom and peace. Thirdly, having read with alarm the letter of 8th May 1984 from the South West Africa Territorial Force to all secondary schools in the country we protest against the interference in the education system, by the military authorities, in asking for the cooperation of principals to encourage their school-leaving pupils to register with the army.

"It is, therefore, against the background of this kind of divisiveness, this consternation and fear, that the Feast of the Birth of the Prince of Peace will be celebrated here this year in Namibia. The words of Christ ring loudly through the prevailing gloom:

"Peace is what I leave with you, it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset, do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

(continued, over)
'We call strongly that this new threat to the establishment of peace and harmony must be removed. We reiterate our appeal for a settlement based on true peace and justice. We continue to believe that this, in political terms, can best be brought about by the speedy implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435, and we urge that the international community should also bring their concerted action to hasten the coming of our independence.'

Signed by:

Bishop James H. Kauluma
President of the Council of Churches
(Anglican Church)

Preses Hendrik Frederik
alternative Vice-President
(Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Father David Bruno
(Anglican Church)

Rev. Bartholomeus Karuaera
(African Methodist Episcopal Church)

Rev. Peter Lamoela
(United Congregational Church of
(Southern Africa - Gordonia Region)

Bishop Bonifatius Haushiku
Vice-President of the Council of Churches
(Roman Catholic Church)

Bishop Kleopas Dumeni
(Evangelical Lutheran OvamboKavango Church)

Rev. Alan Brews
(Methodist Church of Southern Africa)

Rev. Peter Lamoela
(General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia)

(These are all the executive members of the Council of Churches in Namibia, 10 December 1984)

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EPISCOPAL CHURCHMEN FOR SOUTH AFRICA urge Americans to support this Statement of the Council of Churches in Namibia. Urgently press American political figures and church officials to demand Pretoria's withdrawal from Namibia and for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435 at once.

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