

Camp 055911  
MRC KATHARAS

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UN - 11th OCT 1977.

Mr Chairman,

~~His Excellency the Secretary-General,~~

Distinguished Representatives of Governments and Peoples of the World,  
Fellow Freedom-Fighters,

I am deeply honoured to have been invited by the Special Committee to participate in the International Day of Solidarity with Political Prisoners in South Africa.

I was convicted and sentenced with 4 others for activities of Umkhonto We WsSizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress in 1964. I served 12 years on Robben Island and was released after completing my sentence in December 1976 and immediately put under House Arrest. On the instruction of the ANC I escaped from South Africa in July this year.

I assumed these facts were responsible for affording me the honour of addressing you. I welcome this invitation not because I see <sup>in</sup> it as an effort <sup>to</sup> to honour me personally but <sup>as an</sup> to honour <sup>to</sup> all my Comrades-in-arms who are incarcerated in Vorster, prisons.

In so far as life in Robben Island is concerned I should stress that while conditions there are not static, the underlying and dominating approach of the racists remains constant. Their objective is to demoralise us, to break us as freedom-fighters and human beings.

At present there are three main political prisons in South Africa. Black women patriots are incarcerated at Kroonstaad; the small but courageous group of whites who have joined our struggle and completely identified themselves with our aspirations are in Pretoria prison; Black male freedom fighters, including Nelson Mandela, are in Robben Island.

Incarcerated in Robben Island are not only South African freedom fighters but also our Comrades-in-Arms from Namibia. This even the prisons we are kept in, demonstrate the unity of the struggle in Southern Africa as well as the fact that the racist minority rule in South Africa is the bastion and ~~the~~ fount of that

iniquitous rule in the whole of Southern Africa. <sup>in this context suggest that</sup> <sup>of detainees</sup> <sup>in SA & not</sup> <sup>Internal D. of Solidarity</sup> <sup>with SA PP as it is present.</sup> day be called ~~International Day of Solidarity~~ <sup>with SA PP as it is present.</sup>

I bring you greetings from Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners - South African and Namibian - who are on Robben Island. I must thank all freedom loving peoples, non-governmental bodies such as the Anti-Apartheid movement, the International Defence and Aid Fund, international agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, governments, the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations for their solidarity and support of our just struggle. <sup>Re Canon Collins - role he has played in helping defend political prisoners & assist their dependents</sup> The heroism of our people, their mounting anger and the prevailing mood which can only be described as a contempt for death at the hands of the enemy, the continuation of my organisation as the spearhead of the struggle and the ~~support~~ support of the international community have played an important part in sustaining our morale in prison.

I lived in the same section of the prison as leading national figures such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada as well as Toivo

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Ja-Toivo of SWAPO. Throughout those long years and despite all adversity they and all political prisoners on Robben Island remain in high spirits and confident that victory will be ours. Without exception they remain unbroken in spirit and we live our lives in prison conscious that we have been captured but have not surrendered.

From the first day we entered Vorster's prisons we set out to live our lives and ~~guide our actions~~ guide our actions in prison around three central demands:

1. Our immediate and unconditional release,
2. In the interim that we be accorded the status of political prisoners and the treatment that goes with such status;
3. The abolition of racial discrimination in our treatment.

A renowned novelist observed that if you want to understand <sup>stand</sup> a society you should look inside its prisons. The singular inhumanity of the system of Apartheid is to be seen in its sharpest and most Naked forms in Vorster's prisons. It is in prison that ones sees most clearly that racial discrimination is part of the ~~g~~ bones and marrow of the system.

There is not only discrimination between White and Black prisoners, there is discrimination between Black and Black. Robben Island, a prison for Black freedom fighters, ~~mirrors~~ mirrors the race madness of the rulers and their complete inability to see us Blacks as human beings.

As you are aware the racists classify our people as Whites, Africans, Coloureds and people of Indian origin. Robben Island houses Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

As such we have fought Apartheid shoulder to shoulder and gone to prison for the same cause, we live on the Island in the same prison, share the same cells, work and endure the hardships together. Nonetheless the regime discriminates between us and its senior officers try by all means to preach and foster racial hostility even between us Blacks. We eat the same porridge for

breakfast but racism dictates that the Coloured and Indian prisoners be given a tablespoon of sugar while the Africans are given half a tablespoon. And it is decreed that it is a punishable offence for a prisoner to share his food with another. Such humiliating and inhuman discrimination - petty some may call it - is present on Robben Island in the diet, the clothing and in general treatment. It exists to this day and reflects the logic of race madness.

→ include press Council

I owe it to my colleagues in prison that I should acknowledge here that I survived the <sup>brutalities</sup> brutality and inhumanity at the hands of the enemy, not because of any particular strength of my own, but because of the help and comradeship of my fellow prisoners.

In prison and in detention without trial we have endured everything that the enemy has been able to devise in order to break us and we survive.

For me the ~~lessons~~ lessons of that experience are many.

First there is the deepened awareness that Apartheid as a system cannot be humanised by modifications. It has to be overthrown in its entirety, to be uprooted root and branch.

Second, I have come out with a sharpened awareness that in the armoury of weapons we train against the system, the armed struggle is destined to occupy a central role and develop into the dominant form of struggle. Despite formidable setbacks and an unprecedented reign of terror Umkhonto We Sizwe remains alive as a organised and disciplined force active inside South Africa.

Thirdly, incarceration in Vorster's prisons leaves I believe those who emerge more determined and conscious to fight to the bitter end in pursuit of national liberation.

In the recently concluded trial in Pietermaritzburg 9 men were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The judge observed that 4 of them had served

sentences of up to 10 years on Robben Island, that during and after their imprisonment they showed no remorse for their actions, and that on release they went back into active struggle. He considered that his duty to protect society left him in their case with but two alternatives - the death sentence or life imprisonment. Out of mercy he said he would give them life imprisonment. Such is the quality of maericy of the racists in South Africa. That case underscores the immediate prospect of widespread resort by the regime to death sentences as the struggle intansifies. Currently 11 men and a woman are on trial in Pretoria and the State prosecutor is reported to have already called for the death sentence. Five of the trialists are ex-Robben Islanders of whom some have previously served sentences of up to 12 years on Robben Island. I should be failing in my duty if I did not take advantage of this moment to appeal to the world to come to the support of those on trial and demand that the trial of the Pretoria 12 and that of hundreds of others throughout South Africa be halted.

Simultaneously, torture of detainees and deaths in detention without trial have increased at an alarming rate. The racist régime dismisses the deaths in detention as "suicides".

-- In 1964, I spent 118 days in detention before I was put on trial. During  
--- that period I was subjected to systematic torutre for almost two months. And during that period one of my comrades Babla Saloojee was hurled to death from the seventh floor of the interrogation centre. The enemy said he jumped from the window. I and many others know differently for many of us had experienced being dangled out of the seventh floor window and told - "Talk or else ...."



Babla was the <sup>fourth</sup> first victim murdered in detention. That figure has risen dramatically and the world recently heard of the 45th victim, Steve Biko.

While the régime allows the ICRC to visit sentenced prisoners once a year it steadfastly, and despite the mounting record of deaths and stupendous volume of evidence of torture, refuses to allow the Red Cross to visit detainees. This fact and utterances of senior men in the régime are clear evidence that the tortures and murders have the sanction of the highest officials.

The United Nations is to be commended for having set aside 11th October as the International Day of Solidarity with Political Prisoners in South Africa. The observation of this day is a solemn occasion, and the support it symbolises must be developed into concrete forms of action.

Prison for us in Southern Africa has become part of the normal hazards we face on the road to freedom. Our people have come to recognize that many of us will have to risk imprisonment again and again and that we shall have to pay the supreme sacrifice of our lives to be victorious. There is no other choice before us but death or victory!

Halt the trial of the Pretoria 12 and all those appearing in the courts!

Free all detainees!

Free Toiro Ja-Toivo and all Namibian freedom fighters.

On the 7 November 1977, Nelson Mandela will have served 15 years of his life sentence. The régime maintains that life in the case of freedom fighters means natural life. Let the world intensify the demand:—

Free Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners!