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CANADA - SOUTH AFRICA
COOPÉRATION
CANADA - AFRIQUE DU SUD

CSAC FAX NUMBER 233-6228

FAX TRANSMISSION - COVER SHEET

TO: See list below

FAX NO: _____

RE: Press Release - Human Rights Day

FROM: Al Cook

DATE: 9.12.92

Number of Pages (Including Cover Sheet): 6

In case of error please call Sarah

613-233-5939

This fax is for the attention of:

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December 9, 1992

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 1992 -- PRESS STATEMENT BY HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION AND CANADA-SOUTH AFRICA COOPERATION

Today is Human Rights Day, and the attention of the world is focussed on Somalia where the action of the world community, headed by the United States of America and under the aegis of the United Nations, is at last bringing the right to live to thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Somalis.

We pray for the success of this operation, and a quick end to the suffering and death that we thrust upon the Somali people by using them as pawns in the Cold War, and then casting them aside when it ended.

But as we pray for Somalia, we should not forget the suffering and death of the South African people, for which we in the West are also so primarily culpable, for allowing our governments and corporations to connive in the deliberate construction, over a century, of the edifice of apartheid: an edifice of misery, horror, and death for millions, over generations; an edifice built on the foundations of racism and repression; an edifice which stands now, virtually intact.

Let us remember that journalists have been prevented by the laws and practices of apartheid, in South Africa, from bringing to the world the kind of graphic reports that have so disturbed the conscience of world in other countries and regions. Many of these laws and practises still exist.

The attached Press Statement from the Human Rights Commission reveals, for instance, that a "creeping State of Emergency has been introduced through the back door"; that detention without trial, political trials and imprisonment, and deaths in detention go on, and political prisoners are still held; that in the Bantustans, organizations such as the Black Sash women's organization and the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) -- an organization which advises people on land matters -- are banned.

Above all, the political violence -- which does the job of repression so much more effectively than laws and security police -- goes on, with 3600 deaths this year.

Let us here in Canada remember particularly, as we mourn the 14 women killed and 13 injured in the Montreal massacre, and

(continued)

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dedicate ourselves to ending violence against women, that 218 women have been killed and 251 injured in the violence in South Africa so far this year.

Let us in Canada re-dedicate ourselves to giving our full support to the people of South Africa struggling to dismantle and destroy the apartheid system.

They do not have the US Marines.

Please contact me if you need any further information.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Al Cook', with a stylized, flowing script.

Al Cook
Executive Director, Canada-South Africa Cooperation (CSAC)

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

PRESS STATEMENT NO 92/25

N.B

10 DECEMBER 1992

Embargoed until
12.00pm on
Wednesday -
9 Dec 1992.

HRC STATEMENT

ON

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 1992

Another year has gone past and another Human Rights Day has arrived without the realisation of the cherished dream of the vast majority of South Africans, namely, a human rights situation in our country which can stand proud within the family of nations of the world.

The essential obstacle to the achievement of that noble objective is the continued existence of the Apartheid State, aided and abetted by those who would defend their vested interests in apartheid structures and power.

During 1992, by means of repressive powers taken unto itself by such repressive legislation as the Internal Security Act and Public Safety Act, the Apartheid government has continued to notch up a litany of human rights violations and abuses :-

- * A creeping State of Emergency has been introduced through the back door by the increasing use of Unrest Area Declarations' complete with most of the powers of a State of Emergency with which we are so familiar. During 1992, forty magisterial districts have been so declared, or more than during the State of Emergency of 1985/6. On this day there are still 33 magisterial districts affected.
- * Detention without trial, under a variety of laws, is still practised in this day and age. This year over 450 people have experienced the detention cells, and it does not help to justify this indefensible practice by saying that the victims have come from the full political spectrum. Reports of torture and assault in detention persist, a consequence which is inevitable.

- * Over 100 deaths in police custody have been recorded in 1992; deaths while being apprehended or during interrogation or while being held in police cells, mostly prior to being brought to court.
- * Political arrests continue apace, mostly around the curbing of political expression through the blocking of demonstrations, marches and other forms of protest. Over ten thousand such arrests took place in 1992, accompanied by the deaths of 150 people and the injury of 1600 at the hands of the various security forces.
- * Political trials under a plethora of repressive legislation continue to occupy the courts. The year saw over 200 such trials involving over 4000 accused being completed, while another 150 trials involving 1600 accused are ongoing.
- * The political prisoner saga has not yet ended despite the late release in September and November of around 200 prisoners. The HRC lists still contain 250 names.
- * The political exile saga likewise is not complete. Around 4000 exiles are still to be repatriated, but there is a mounting reluctance to return to a situation fraught with problems, not the least of which is the harassment experienced by returnees at the hands of the security forces, and the threat of assassination.
- * Death row currently has around 300 occupants, most of whom have been there for several years, with their fate in the balance. Executions have been suspended since 1990 (except in the TBVC homelands), but a further 30 deaths sentences were handed down during 1992.
- * Whites-only conscription is still in force and efforts to have military conscription declared unlawful have thus far failed.
- * The power to ban organisations still stands under the Internal Security Act, but has not been invoked during the year. However in Bophuthatswana Black Sash and TRAC are banned, as are trade unions which have not registered there.
- * The power to ban gatherings, either at Ministerial level or magisterial level, still stands under the Internal Security Act and is in frequent use. The resistance to protest marches and other forms of political expression by the Ciskei and Bophuthatswana authorities is well known.

All of the above violations of human rights are being perpetrated by the Apartheid State in terms of the laws of the land. However, the matter does not stop there. Numerous other abuses take place daily through security force covert operations, hit squad attacks and assassinations, and vigilante groupings.

Retaliatory action, provoked and unprovoked, serve to compound and aggravate the levels of abuse; and attacks on policemen and innocent civilians do nothing to advance the cause of human rights in South Africa.

By the end of 1992, all of these activities will have resulted in the following for the year:-

- * A total of 3600 deaths, or 40% more than 1991.
This means an average of 10 deaths a day, for every day of the year.
- * A total of around 6000 injured, many of them maimed or scarred for life.
- * Tens of thousands displaced and homeless.

- * Amongst the victims are
 - train commuters, 275 dead and 550 injured
 - women, 218 killed and 251 injured
 - children, 10 killed and 81 injured
 - security force members, 115 dead and 180 injured
 - political activists, 100 assassinations

The depressing picture of the human rights situation in South Africa as outlined above, cannot be allowed to continue. Having come as far as we have in dismantling Apartheid, a responsibility rests on all South Africans and on the international community, to see that the job is finished.

A new and democratic constitution with an entrenched Bill of Rights which could be a shining example to all the world, is now in sight. May we be celebrating its achievement on Human Rights Day, 1993.