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STATEMENT BY THE HON PRIME
MINISTER R. G. MUGABE
Cl. Conference Statement
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN
REPRESSION AND THE LAW IN APARTHEID
SOUTH AFRICA
Harare, September 24-27, 1987
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STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER, COMRADE
R.G. MUGABE, AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN, REPRESSION AND THE LAW IN
APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA; HARARE, ZHTEH SEPTEMBER 1987.

Mr. Chairnan, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston.
Archbishop Desnond Tutu.
Conrade Oliver Tanbo, President of the ANC,
Honourable Ministers.
Members of the Diplomatic Corps.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Conrades and Friends,

it is a singular honour for us in Zimbabwe that our
Capital City has been chosen as the venue for this
unique Conference on Children, Repression and the
Law in Apartheid South Africa. I personally feel
specially honoured and privileged that I have been
asked to address the Opening Session of the Conference.
I wish, Mr. Chairnan, to preface my statement with
an expression of a sincere wish from the Government
and people of Zimbabwe, that all the delegates here
gathered will have a pleasant stay with us. We
certainly trust that those who are visiting Zimbabwe
for the first time will take time off to acquaint
themselves with the generality of our people and scene
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of the natural or physical attractions of our country. We like to think that the entire country is an open tourist resort and all our people are your hosts. On their behalf, I wish to welcome you all to Ziubobwe and to this Conference.

I hope I can be allowed to extend a special word of welcome to you, Archbishop Huddleston. You are no stranger to Southern Africa. Having spent a good part of your life in South Africa and being one of the -pioneers and an ally in the anti-apartheid struggle. Your continued fight from Great Britain against the evil apartheid system is greatly encouraging and is appreciated by us in Southern Africa.

The international character of participants at this Conference is a very clear manifestation of the universality of the feeling of revulsion and concern generated by the dehumanisation to which the majority of the people of South Africa are daily subjected by the apartheid system in that country. I sincerely hope that the deliberations of this Conference will enhance international awareness of the terrible blight and situation of the weakest and most vulnerable of the South African population, namely, the Black

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children who are as we know, the Host hapless and
helpless vlctlns of the evil nonster that is apartheid.
It is they Who are daily Iralnourlshed by apartheid.
It is they who are daily niseducoted by apartheid.
It Is they who, above all, are daily Jailed, named,
and nurdered by apartheid.
Yet, international awareness of the suffering of the
children in apartheid South Affico ls alOne not adequate
unless It is followed by a resolve, detenrlnatlon
and strength to fight and eradicate the heinous systetr
frdr our civilised world. The pariah state of South
Africa has no legitltrate clallr to being part of the
civilised international comrunity as long as the
sanctity and respect for the rule of law has not been
restored in. that country. Indeed, no society has
a right to be regarded and accepted as part of civilised
hmanlty unless and until Its legal systelr and practice
Guarantees the rights of all its citizens, regardless
of race, sex, political and religious convictions.
The prisons of South Africa are today full of children
who, under civilised conditions should be in schools
undergoing preparation for their future roles and
responsibilities as citizens of their country. Alas.
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their prescribed lot is that of being murdered.
tortured, brutalised and imprisoned.

I commend the organisers of this important Conference
for having invited some of the victims of the immoral
racist regime to come and give their own testimony.
Equally vital will be the accounts of the mothers
of the victims, the lawyers who have dealt with the
cases of the children, as well as the pastors and
welfare officers who are battling to rehabilitate
the emotionally and spiritually shattered young people
and children in that sad land.

You, and all of us from this region, know that the
rule of law does not exist in apartheid South Africa.
The law, such as exists there, is only for the
advancement and protection of the privileges of the
few. The law and all the related state institutions
have been designed and geared to protect and promote
the interests of the White minority by systematically
troubling upon even the most basic rights of the Black
masses.

Should any voice of conscience draw attention to the
injustice of the system and criticise the so-called
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law enforcement agents, such criticism is contemptuously ignored. Recently, the Detainees' Parents Support Committee published its informative reports or studies on tortures and detentions in the 1980s. The reactions of the racist Minister of Law and Order was characteristic. He accused the Committee of vilifying the police. The cases of child arrest and assault, and the sordid examples of torture in detention were dismissed as mere fabrications. The sleep deprivation to which young detainees were subjected, the suspension in mid-air, the kicking, beating, electric shocking, the stripping and numerous other horrific perpetrations which the youths and children received from their Interrogators, did not revulse the so-called Minister of Law and Order. How could they? Revulsion is a response of a person of conscience and morality. Mr. Vlok and all the members of his apartheid regime are evidently bent on losing conscience and morality are mere trifles. Murder cannot, in such circumstances, any longer revulse the bloody heart of its perpetrator, for each murder committed also destroyed his moral conscience, hardening him more and more to the shedding of blood. The expression 'bloody boer' cannot be without significance.

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This Conference, Mr. Chalmers, and especially the testimonies of participants from South Africa, should provide a rare opportunity for relating to the outside world the story of the human tragedy taking place in South Africa.

The traumatic and horrifying experiences in the dark and squalid prisons and detention centres are more clearly and vividly narrated by those who went through them. We have some of them in our midst.

Mr. Chalmers, as the report of UNICEF has recently illustrated, the tragedy of the Black children and youths in South Africa extends to their brothers and sisters in the Frontline States. I refer here to the report, entitled W

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IDE_LhldLQD_in_5QHIDELE_QHQ_\$QHID_AELlQQL This FBDOfT draws urgent and special world attention to the serious and desperate plight of the children of the entire sub-continent and rightly attributes it to the apartheid regime's internal repression and destabilising activities within the region. Indeed, many of you from outside the region have heard or read about the effects of South Africa's apartheid policies, the

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regime's economic disruption and political destabilisation and their destructive effects upon the lives and welfare of the Blacks in South Africa and the peoples of the entire region. The statistics are readily available. But way I remind you, that behind those figures or statistics are real children, youths and their parents, with human feelings of pain, fear, want and hunger. I trust that this important Conference on children, repression and the law in South Africa, will enhance your appreciation of this fact even more and the need to move to action to stop the suffering of- the little ones and their parents.

Let me, once again, wish this Conference all success, bearing in mind the interests of the children in apartheid South Africa. the Front Line States and the world over.

It is - now my great pleasure to declare this International Conference on Children. Repression and Law in Apartheid South Africa officially open.

Thank you.

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