

TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH S. LANDIS TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND MOVEMENTS OF THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 27 SEPTEMBER 1973

Mr. Chairman,

I am here today to discuss three closely related matters:
human rights--or, rather, the lack of them-- in southern
Africa; the failure of the United States to support human
rights in southern Africa; and the actions we should take.

I am sure that the members of this Sub-committee are generally
aware of conditions in South Africa, Namibia (South West
Africa), Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), and the Portuguese colonies
(Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau). The written statement
which I have submitted shows that the South African govern-
ment does not honor a single one of the rights enumerated
in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Rhodesian
and Portuguese colonial regimes are no better.

In this presentation I intend to point out only a few of
the most egregious violations of human rights in southern
Africa, calling the attention of Sub-committee members to
the fact that in most cases these violations affect Blacks
only.

The basic violation-- which makes all the others possible-- is the denial of the franchise to all nonwhites, who are also denied all peaceful means of protest.

Another is the denial of free movement throughout their countries-- and particularly to the cities, where the jobs are-- by means of an onerous and humiliating "pass" system. As many as a million Africans are jailed in a single year in South Africa for technical violations connected with the pass laws. If picked up in the harvest season-- when the police conduct special enforcement drives-- they may end as involuntary farm labor, since the law permits renting (Black) prisoners to private employers. The value of land in the Cape Province for a farmer with rights to prison labor rises R1,000 (\$1,400) per convict.

The pass system, as administered, effectively denies normal married life to most Africans by barring women from entering the "white" cities, where their men have to go to find work. In many cases it is a penal offense for a Black man to sleep with his wife in a city.

Nor can Africans escape the pass system by emigrating. Like the Jews of Russia, the entire nonwhite 80+% of the population of South Africa is prohibited from leaving the Republic.

Another gross violation is the forced removal of Blacks from their home. In South Africa they are sent, for ideological reasons, to overcrowded, eroded reserves, where many die of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition. This is also the case in parts of Zimbabwe, where government officials recently took away the children of one tribe which resisted relocation. In the Portuguese colonies and other parts of Zimbabwe Africans are forced into fortified resettlement areas to isolate them from rebels fighting for independence.

Among the most serious violations of human rights affecting all critics of the white regimes in southern Africa is detention and imprisonment without trial. In Zimbabwe several hundred persons have been held since 1965. Detainees in all these countries are routinely tortured as a means of interrogation or to punish them for their opinions. No one knows how many have died in detention, for the governments do not account for political prisoners.

In Zimbabwe the government punishes Africans believed to aid the rebels by levying collective fines, taking their cattle, burning their huts, and closing down their schools and medical services.

Far worse is the creation of so-called "no-go" areas in Zimbabwe and the Portuguese territories. There, as in the "free fire" zones of Vietnam, government troops and planes destroy anything that moves or grows-- using guns, bombs, napalm, and herbicides. Catholic priests have recently confirmed African stories of Portuguese atrocities in not only one, but numerous cases: the torture and murder of all inhabitants of peaceful villages, Mylai style. (See Appendix II to written statement.)

What has the United States done about the violation of human rights in southern Africa?

Very little, if we exclude virtuous statements. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that our government is accommodating itself to such violations and not exerting any substantial effort to discourage them.

Consider the American role in the UN during 1972 (See Appendix I to written statement):

Of 8 major Assembly resolutions on southern Africa or colonial territories generally, the United States, in company with

South Africa and Portugal, opposed 7 and abstained on one. In the Security Council it supported negotiations on Namibia, which were opposed by all friends of that Territory, and helped pressure the African states to continue them when it was obvious they couldn't succeed. It did support one Security Council resolution calling for more effective sanctions against Rhodesia, but the resolution was interpreted not to require any change in American conduct. Finally, on the ground that the UN Council for Namibia is ineffective, the United States refused to assist the Council when it tried to take some effective action through an investigation of labor conditions in Namibia.

American implementation of UN arms embargoes against South Africa and Portugal shows a similar accommodation to the white regimes in recent years: Thus there has been a continuing erosion of these embargoes by executive redefinition of the "arms" covered. In this respect, I would refer this Sub-committee to testimony by Mrs. Jennifer Davis and Judge William Booth before the Sub-committee on Africa on 16 June 1971 and 22 March 1973 and ask that that testimony be made a part of this Sub-committee's record. (Copy attached to written statement.)

That testimony reveals that objects considered non-exportable to the People's Republic of China before our recent detente are nevertheless available to the regimes of southern Africa: e.g., light aircraft, helicopters, Boeing 747's for Portugal (admittedly used for troop transport in Africa), jeeps, heavy trucks, and other forms of transport. G.I. rifles are reportedly made in Portugal under US license, so that the embargo does not apply to them.

It is my understanding that herbicides, long subject to export license, are now freely exported and considered outside the embargo despite our experience with their use in Vietnam. Recent increases in Portuguese and South African purchases of these products support reports, some of them by eye-witnesses, that defoliants are widely used against the Africans.

Further, Portuguese deserters and other sources assert-- despite State Department denials-- that substantial numbers of Portuguese soldiers have been trained by Americans in counter-in-surgency, however denominated. It is known that senior Portuguese military officers have spent substantial periods in the United States and that American military attaches accompany Portuguese units to the African "front" as observers.

Finally, in relation to the American role I must mention enactment of the "Byrd Amendment", which invalidated UN-imposed sanctions against Rhodesia.

What should the United States do to revive and support human rights in southern Africa?

Certainly we should support all feasible measures to strengthen the UN's human rights mechanisms. Some such measures are, I understand, before this Sub-committee. However, this Sub-committee should recognize that the United States has little credibility today at the UN, particularly in human rights. Consequently, we must first set our own house in order before prescribing to the rest of the world.

I do not intend to advert to the steps which are required to extend human rights within this country. I would like, however to make some suggestions for American action vis-a-vis southern Africa:

- (1) ratify the UN conventions on human rights and against racial discrimination and genocide
- (2) contribute to the UN Trust Fund for southern Africa
- (3) repeal the Byrd Amendment

- (4) enact the Chemical Warfare Prevention Bill of 1973 (H.R. 8574)
- (5) redefine "arms" covered by the embargoes against South Africa and Portugal to include inter alia, all aircraft; all transport and related equipment convertible to military use; computers and advanced electronic equipment; patents and know-how relating to the above, as well as all military patents and know-how; all nuclear devices and technical information in relation thereto
- (6) stop training of South African and Portuguese military and police personnel
- (7) have an official American representative present at all political trials in South Africa and issue appropriate condemnations of political trials when they take place
- (8) cooperate with the UN Council for Namibia, instead of sabotaging it, so that it can make the most of its opportunities
- (9) recognize the right of voteless Africans to rebel against the white, minority regimes of southern Africa, as our Thirteen Colonies did in 1776
- (10) grant asylum to political refugees from southern Africa on terms comparable to those granted Cuban refugees
- (11) insist that Portugal account for all Nato arms it receives from our government. (now we accept Portuguese "assurances" that they won't be used in Africa)