

American Committee On Africa

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**Testimony of the American Committee on Africa
Before the Fourth Committee**

United Nations

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, and guests, my name is Lisa Crooms and I serve as the Research Director of the American Committee on Africa. On behalf of the American Committee on Africa, I would like to thank the Fourth Committee for providing our organization with the opportunity to appear today in support of the struggles of the peoples of Namibia. I would also like to acknowledge the courageous and unrelenting commitment of the members of the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) who for decades have been at the forefront of the struggle for the independence and self-determination of their country. For this, I applaud and commend you.

The American Committee on Africa has been diligently working for over thirty years to provide support for the fight for freedom and self-determination in Africa. In our work to help coordinate U.S. solidarity with struggles for independence and liberation throughout the continent, the struggle of the peoples of Namibia has always played an integral role.

As the members of this Committee are well aware, this is a critical time for Namibia work in the U.S. Time and time again,



the powers that be in this country have exhibited their complete insensitivity to the plight of Africans, in general, and Namibians, in particular. The President has blatantly disregarded the right of Namibians to self-determination and independence. The Reagan Administration continues to link the issue of Namibian independence to the presence of Cuban troops in the sovereign nation of Angola, while actively supporting UNITA's terrorism in that country, thus providing the Angolan government with the need for external assistance. Reagan also remains staunchly opposed to the imposition of sanctions against the white minority regime in South Africa, as evidenced by his veto of Congressional measures designed to put into effect the very limited U.S. sanctions against Pretoria.

But, as the Congress delivered a sharp rebuke of "constructive engagement" and continued U.S. complicity with apartheid on 2 October, the situation of Namibians is unchanged. Although the sanctions legislation does contain Namibia language, it is clear that the linkage of the issue of apartheid to southern Africa concerns, in general and those of Namibia, in particular has not effectively taken place. We in the progressive community in this country have made quite a bit of progress on this front, but we admit that our work is far from over. We are planning to continue our efforts in support of Namibia and to oppose the continued exploitation of Namibia's natural and human resources until the ultimate goals of freedom, independence and self-determination for our Namibian brothers and sisters is realized.

As the issue of apartheid has forged to the forefront of the U.S. political scene, the issue of South Africa's illegal occupa-

tion of Namibia has more often than not been obscured by the struggle of South Africa's disenfranchised masses. However, this heightened awareness of the general public of the U.S. regarding South Africa has resulted in increased concern for those affected both directly and indirectly by South Africa's apartheid system and its destabilization of the southern Africa region. The American Committee on Africa, in conjunction with our colleagues in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement, has sought to transform the movement to support freedom in South Africa into a movement for freedom in southern Africa, with the Namibia issue playing an important role in this transformation.

It is in this context that we at the American Committee on Africa help to provide the Namibian peoples with U.S. non-governmental support for their struggle. Our Namibia program is many faceted, ranging from preparing Namibia-specific resources and integrating Namibia into our ongoing campaigns to coordinating material aid campaigns and relief efforts for those refugees displaced by South Africa's regional aggression. Our major recent efforts include the following: the Namibia Information Project; the WLIB Namibia Information Day; the Political Prisoners and Detainees Campaign; the Divestment Movement; and the Africa Fund Material Aid Campaign. I will provide you with a brief summary of the American Committee on Africa's activities designed to provide U.S. support for the work of United Nations bodies such as the Fourth Committee and the struggle for independence of the Namibian peoples.

NAMIBIAN INFORMATION PROJECT

Through the Namibian Information Project, we have attempted to maximize our impact on the U.S. public by preparing a series of brief, popularly written documents on the situation in Namibia that activists have found very useful in introducing the Namibia issue around the country. These materials have been sent out to tens of thousands of individuals and organizations, and they have been used to resource campaigns and demonstrations in places such as Boston, Washington, New York, Chicago, and other cities where there are strong existing anti-apartheid movements. It is interesting to note that these resources have sparked material aid and fundraising drives in a number of cities.

We have also integrated Namibia into some of our most popular resources. For example, we have compiled a comprehensive list of U.S. corporations with investments in and loans to South Africa and Namibia. This resource has been distributed to individuals and organizations throughout the country as well as in the international community. It has provided many activists and individuals with accurate and important information regarding U.S. corporate exploitation of the natural and human resources of South Africa and Namibia. We have also prepared U.S./Namibia trade statistics and other important economic information for those interested in the monetary value attached to the raping of Namibia's land.

In addition, under this project a number of interviews have been conducted with Namibians that have been circulated widely and published in a number of different places. Of particular importance, we feel, was an interview with SWAPO Secretary General Andimba Toivo ja Toivo and another with the Anglican Bishop

of Namibia, the Right Reverend James Kauluma. These interviews have provided answers to the often asked question "What do Namibians think?"

Recently, much work has been done to generate interest in and support for the Namibian people through the legislative process. During the 99th session of the U.S. Congress, a number of bills were introduced dealing with the Namibia issue as well as related U.S. policy. We sent out numerous mailings to a network of thousands of activists in an attempt to generate grassroots support for the passage of progressive Namibia specific legislation (e.g. that which embodies most of United Nations Decree Number One) as well as opposition to reactionary legislation (e.g. the provision of U.S. assistance to Jonas Savimbi and UNITA in Angola).

During the 99th Session of the U.S. Congress, an intensive campaign was mounted to make Namibia a primary legislative issue on Capitol Hill. We resourced members of Congress with relevant information which supported the case for Namibian independence and provided answers to many questions raised by these members. The precedent set during this session of Congress, with the passage of South Africa sanctions and the introduction of a number of Namibia-specific bills, laid the groundwork for our continued legislative campaign for the coming years.

A major portion of the Namibia Information Project's work consists of publishing material on Namibia in a wide variety of small newspapers and periodicals around the country. This particular aspect of the Namibia Information Project has facilitated

outreach beyond established networks in order to make many people aware of the existence and South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, and this work will continue in the ensuing months.

A number of conferences dealing with Namibia have been planned. Three of the most important, we feel, are a U.S. student conference held in June, 1986 designed to provide student activists with ideas for the integration of Namibia into their campus anti-apartheid work, a non-governmental organization conference to be held in Sweden the week of 13 October 1986, of which we were part of the planning committee, and a conference being held at Namibia's Augustana Lutheran Seminary scheduled for March, 1987.

WLIB NAMIBIA INFORMATION DAY

The American Committee on Africa, together with David Lampelle and Inner City Broadcasting of New York, is coordinating a day-long radio broadcast designed to provide information and raise the general consciousness regarding Namibia. This effort, scheduled for 27 October 1986, will include live and taped interviews with Namibians and analysis of the issue. This activity will be part of a national day of actions in solidarity with our Namibian brothers and sisters, with a major demonstration planned for Washington, D.C. According to Mr. Lampelle, Inner City Broadcasting is interested in airing weekly Namibia news features to help mobilize the New York area in support of the struggle of the Namibian peoples.

POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DETAINEES CAMPAIGN

One of the ongoing campaigns of the American Committee on

Africa is our political prisoners and detainees campaign. One of the major activities planned for 1986 is to help with the coordination of a national day of protest in solidarity with South African and Namibian political prisoners and detainees. This day of protest, scheduled to take place tomorrow 10 October 1986, will include scores of actions on college and university campuses and in communities that are designed to provide a practical action handle for activists across the country. Major actions are scheduled for New York City, Washington, D.C., Sacramento, Nashville, Atlanta, and numerous other locations. The coordination of this action marks the beginning of the latest round of our ongoing campaign which will continue through 1987.

DIVESTMENT MOVEMENT

One of the most successful ongoing U.S. efforts is the state and local divestment campaign. Nineteen states and more than eighty cities and counties have adopted some type of divestment measure affecting over \$18 billion in public funds. Although most of the divestment initiatives that have been passed are South Africa specific, a number of the strongest bills have included Namibia language, and it is our intention to continue raising the issue of Namibia and pushing for its inclusion in pending and future divestment measures.

MATERIAL AID CAMPAIGN

The American Committee on Africa's affiliated organization, the Africa Fund, has for years provided material support for southern Africa refugees. Africa Fund projects, for instance, have supported Namibians presently located in SWAPO refugee camps

in Angola. Over the past few years, the Africa Fund has provided \$200,000.00 in material aid to southern Africa refugees displaced due to South Africa's regional aggression. Our most recent shipment, which was shipped in September, was sent to assist Namibians in SWAPO's Angolan refugee camps.

As evidenced by the aforementioned projects, the American Committee on Africa has sought to focus some of the energy generated by those working to fight apartheid on the closely related issue of Namibian independence. It must be noted that we have not been alone. With the assistance of organizations such as United Nations bodies, SWAPO, the American Lutheran Church, the Washington Office on Africa, the Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa, and many others too numerous to mention, we have relentlessly attempted to make Namibia, SWAPO, and the United Nations Council for Namibia household words. Although our work is far from over, you in this room, and the Namibian brothers and sisters can rest assured that we will not cease our activities until Namibian independence becomes a reality.

We would not be so arrogant so as to assert that Namibian independence will be a result of the actions of the U.S. or international community alone. We are clear that the freedom of the Namibian peoples will become a reality as international forces work in concert with the struggling of our Namibian brothers and sisters. We ask that this Committee and other relevant United Nations bodies continue to demand and work for the end of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. You can be sure that the American Committee on Africa will continue to do its

utmost to publicize and raise the consciousness of the U.S.
people with regards to the Namibian peoples struggle for freedom.

Thank you.