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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-fourth session
Agenda item 12

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS
IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL
AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 9 March 1988 from the Permanent Representative of
Zimbabwe to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to
the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

In my capacity as representative of the Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, may I bring to your attention the apprehensions of the Chairman regarding the strenuous efforts being undertaken by some Commission members to inject, under item 12 of the agenda, matters intended to blur the focus of the Commission on a wide range of human rights abuses which are the subject of current deliberations.

The apprehensions of the Chairman and indeed of the entire spectrum of the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries stem from the reverence they hold for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as a unique custodian and progenitor of international standards for human rights. Sometimes the Commission is the only source of relief as well as the yardstick by which to measure human rights standards for many peoples struggling under the weighty yoke of colonialism, occupation and racism. And in some cases the standards set by the Commission and its surveillance mechanisms are the only defence which some citizens have against the brutalities of their own Governments.

Since the rejection last year by the Commission of attempts to introduce extraneous issues designed to bring about unjustified politicization of the Commission, the meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held at ministerial level in New York in October 1987 adopted a Declaration which

reads in part as follows: "the Ministers and Heads of Delegations deplored attempts by certain countries to abuse the issue of human rights as a means of political intervention and aggression against members of the Movement" (para. 149). I wish to request that the members of the Commission take into account these high-level views of the Movement in their consideration of item 12 of their agenda.

I implore you, Mr. Chairman, to bring the influence of your distinguished office to bear on this question. For what is increasingly at stake is the ultimate survival of the Commission itself, its purposes, its procedures, its integrity and, above all, its restraining influence on Governments. To do otherwise would amount to a negation and a betrayal of the Commission's responsibilities to the victims of human rights abuses the world over. For the Commission would have squeezed out its legitimate constituents, among them being the victims of Zionism and occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as in other Arab occupied territories, and of apartheid and colonialism in South Africa and Namibia, where flagrant violations of human rights are taking place on a scale which in recent history can only rival that of the crimes against humanity which were perpetrated under the ideologies of nazism and fascism.

I request that this letter be distributed as an official document of the Commission on agenda item 12. I would also like to assure you that the Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, through his representative, is ready to co-operate with you in whatever efforts you may wish to undertake in order to prevent the ultimate desecration of our Commission.

fSigned]

A.T. MUGOMBA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative