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LETTER DATED 9 NOVEMBER 1978 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF ZAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I wish to bring to your attention and that of the Security Council the following information concerning the act of aggression committed against my country by the illegal racist minority régime in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia on Thursday, 19 October 1978, at 0830 hours, Zambian time.

The aggression, committed with the use of jet bombers and helicopter gunships, was aimed at the camps of the ZAPU wing of the Patriotic Front. The rebel Southern Rhodesian forces attacked the Chikumbi Refugee Camp 20 kilometres outside Lusaka where resided 1,900 non-combatant refugees. They used four jet bombers directly on the camp, while four other jet military aircraft orbited the Lusaka area and took complete control of Zambian air space for the duration of the attack.

The orbiting jets threatened to bomb any aircraft that dared to take off in the Lusaka area at that time and directed the control tower at the Lusaka International Airport to obey all their instructions and made it clear that the orbiting rebel aircraft were under orders to shoot down any Zambian aircraft - civil and military - which failed to obey. They emphasized that they had come to attack "terrorist" camps.

The bombardment of Chikumbi Refugee Camp lasted 32 minutes and left 226 people dead and 629 injured. The death toll from the camp has now risen to 337, including the injured who have since died in hospital.

I have to emphasize that this camp was not a camp for combatants but a settlement for ordinary refugees who have fled to Zambia from the horrors inside Southern Rhodesia itself.

From Chikumbi, the rebel Southern Rhodesian forces attacked Lunsemfwa Girls' Camp further to the north. Again this is not a camp for combatants but a training centre, where capable young Rhodesian girls who arrive in Zambia as refugees are taken to learn civil skills which they can put to good use in future on their return home when Zimbabwe is free. It is not a camp for fighters.

At the time of the attack, there were 1,600 refugee girls learning at the camp. More than half of this number are now either missing or injured, or dead.

Among the dead, about 50 were killed in the most callous, barbaric and savage manner. After bombarding the place, the helicopters landed some rebel soldiers to seek out the hiding girls. Apparently they knew the girl in charge of the camp by name. They shouted out, calling her. Eventually she came out. They asked her to get her whistle and blow it so that other girls could come out from hiding. She blew the whistle and called. Finally about 50 girls came out to line up with her before the rebel troops. This head girl was given a gun and ordered to shoot down all her friends. She refused. Upon that, the rebel soldiers shot her dead in front of all the girls. Then they gunned down the rest of the girls.

From the girls' camp, the rebels turned to bombard Rufunsa Camp, lying to the east and nearer the Rhodesian border. There, they met with stiff opposition from the freedom fighters. This was the only camp of combatants they dared to attack, and seven of the attacking rebel military aircraft were shot down.

There were no dead fighters on the side of the Patriotic Front Forces at this camp of combatants, although eight were injured. Of these, only four were serious enough to be brought for admission to hospital for treatment.

During these attacks, Zambia lost 31 members of her security forces. When it was learned that the rebel forces were attacking the defenceless girls at the Lunsemfwa refugee training centre, Zambian security forces were rushed to the area to repel the rebels. It was in the ensuing action that the 31 men lost their lives.

Apart from the members of the security forces, at least half a dozen Zambian civilians who were travelling near this area at the time were murdered by the Southern Rhodesian rebels. They were ambushed, attacked, killed and burned inside their own vehicles by the Southern Rhodesian rebels in the area of the Lunsemfwa camp.

It will be noted from the above brief account that the rebel forces were most careful in directing their attack against soft targets of the Patriotic Front. These are camps settled by unarmed and non-combatant men and women. When they finally attacked one camp of combatants, they received stiff opposition and lost some of their fighter planes, as explained above.

The rebel Rhodesian forces succeeded in breaking through Zambian air defences because of a combination of bad factors during that particular period which included:

- (a) Zambia's inadequate radar coverage over its long frontiers with Rhodesia;
- (b) The break-down of the civilian radar system for some weeks prior to the attack;
- (c) The breaking by the rebels of the secret code name of our Air Force reconnaissance jets along the border at the time and using that code to camouflage themselves as they broke through Zambian air space to take complete control of it to facilitate their bombing mission.

These dastardly attacks by the rebels will not in any way deter Zambia's commitment to the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe. Zambia will continue to act as a reliable rear base for the Patriotic Front and will not consider any price too high to pay for the freedom of the still oppressed people of this region.

Zambia supports the struggle for the freedom of Zimbabwe on principle, and nothing can alter that principle. Ian Smith and his rebel authority are the enemy. The Patriotic Front are our allies. Zambia will continue to do everything in its power to support its allies to the best of its ability.

However, apart from the destruction of life and property the invasion has left behind immense problems of caring for the sick and wounded, clothes, food etc. for the survivors. Much food grown by these refugees was destroyed. There is, of course, the most urgent need for medicine. Without the invasion, our hospitals are already overfilled with patients, and our medicines are in short supply. As a result of the invasion, one third of the capacities of the hospitals in Lusaka and Kabwe have already been taken up by the casualties of the last attacks. More attacks are expected in the coming weeks, especially in the rainy season - December to March - when the liberation war will intensify.

These attacks are merely the beginnings of the holocaust in southern Africa which has been spoken of so often not only by us in Zambia but by many others who understand the situation. Under the current developments, this eventuality is now inevitable, as it is clearly irreversible. All progressive forces must prepare themselves for this outcome.

You will appreciate that except for the great presence of mind and restraint on the part of Zambia, the holocaust should have come to southern Africa on the Thursday morning of 19 October, with the arrival of the rebel Southern Rhodesian jet bombers over Lusaka, killing and injuring almost 1,000 defenceless people in less than half an hour. Zambia has only temporarily saved southern Africa, the continent and the world from witnessing a terrible and enlarged war.

Presently, events in southern Africa are taking an ugly and irreversible turn. Peace will be overtaken in southern Africa any time. I wish to emphasize that my Government takes a very serious view of the escalating conflict in southern Africa. The continued existence of racist minority régimes in the region clearly constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security which the Security Council must not ignore, in view of its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council and the international community as a whole have an inescapable and urgent duty to remove the root cause of conflict in southern Africa and to provide concrete and substantial material and other forms of assistance to those of us in the region who continue to make tremendous sacrifices in the struggle for freedom and justice, which, needless to say, are United Nations ideals.

I should be grateful if this communication could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gwendoline C. KONIE  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative of the Republic  
of Zambia to the United Nations

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