



## The Expression 'Bloody Boer' cannot be without significance

Mr Chairman, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Comrade Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, Honourable Ministers, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades 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 Chairman, to preface my statement with an expression of a sincere wish from the Government and people of Zimbabwe for the first time will take time off to acquaint themselves with the general-ity of our people and some 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 Zimbabwe 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 South 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

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, 24TH SEPTEMBER 1987.

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 plight and situation of the weakest and most vulnerable of the South African population, namely, the Black children who are as we know, the most hapless and helpless victims of the evil monster that is apartheid. It is they who are daily malnourished by apartheid. It is they who are daily mis-educated by apartheid. It is they who, above all, are daily jailed, maimed and murdered by apartheid.

Yet, international awareness of the suffering of the children in apartheid South Africa is alone not adequate unless it is followed by a resolve, determination and strength to fight and eradicate the heinous system from our civilised world. The pariah state of South Africa has no legitimate claim to being part of the civilised international community 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 humanity unless and until its legal system 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, 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 most 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 trampling 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 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 strip-

and more to the shedding of blood. The expression "bloody boer" cannot be without significance.

This Conference, Mr Chairman, 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

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 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 may I remind you, that behind those figures or statistics are real children, youths and their parents, with names, human feelings of pain, fear, want and



*'Bloody Boer'*

ping 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 men to whom conscience and morality are mere trifles. Murder cannot, in such circumstances any longer revulse the bloody heft of its perpetrator, for each murder committed also destroyed his moral conscience, hardening him more

in our midst.

Mr Chairman, 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 *Children on the Frontline*, the impact of Apartheid, Destabilisation and Warfare on the Children in Southern and South Africa. This report 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

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.