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LETTER DATED 22 DECEMBER 1976 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to the attention of the members of the Security Council through you, the serious acts of aggression, the most recent of which occurred between 17 and 19 December 1976, against my country - Botswana - committed by the illegal white minority régime in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia.

As a result of these acts of aggression, tension between Botswana and the illegal white minority régime in the colony of Southern Rhodesia has been mounting steadily. In recent months and weeks, and as a result of the intensified gallant struggle being waged by the people of Zimbabwe for the liberation of their country, the illegal white minority régime in the colony of Southern Rhodesia has stepped up acts of subversion, murder, arson and kidnapping against Botswana under the pretext that Botswana was supporting and harbouring freedom fighters. While the United Nations and the Security Council in particular are committed to the immediate implementation of the principle of majority rule and independence in Southern Rhodesia, the illegal Ian Smith régime meanwhile is continuing through armed aggression to harass and blackmail the Government and people of Botswana in total defiance of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Security Council, into abandoning their support for the legitimate struggle of the people of Zimbabwe. These acts constitute a serious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country.

In this regard, I wish also to transmit the following excerpt from the statement made by the Honourable Dr. Q. K. J. Masire, Vice President of Botswana, in the House of Parliament on 17 December 1976:

"It is my sad duty to inform this Honourable House about the deteriorating situation on our border with Rhodesia. Since 27 December 1966 thirty-one violations of our territorial sovereignty by members of the Rhodesian security forces have come to our notice. There have obviously been many more which have not been reported to government. Twelve out of the thirty-one violations have taken place this year and they are also becoming far more serious. They include murder, arson, kidnapping and destruction of dwelling houses with explosives. They are no longer directed only at refugees from Rhodesia who have been granted refuge in Botswana but the recent victims include Batswana.

"It has always been the policy of government to grant asylum to genuine political refugees from neighbouring countries. It has also always been our policy not to permit Botswana to be used as a launching pad for attacks against neighbouring states. There are no bases in Botswana from which freedom fighters launch attacks against neighbouring countries. Yet the Smith régime has gone to great lengths in their attempts to persuade the international community that Botswana has permitted the establishment of such bases.

"It is obvious that the Smith régime is telling such outrageous and deliberate lies in a vain attempt to justify its acts of murder, arson and kidnapping against Botswana in Botswana. It is obvious that this brutal and murderous gang of thugs who consider themselves to be the government of Rhodesia are determined to increase the frequency and magnitude of their attacks against Botswana in an attempt to intimidate us to the extent that we deny refuge to their victims. This will not happen.

"It is true that some freedom fighters have fled into Botswana from Rhodesia and have surrendered themselves to the Botswana police. It is also true that Botswana refused the Rhodesian requests for their return to Rhodesia. All of them have been repatriated from Botswana to other friendly countries.

"We have nothing to hide and I here and now invite anyone who believes that there are freedom fighters' bases in Botswana to come here and show them to us. Anyone who wishes to accept this invitation should contact the Office of the President in Gaborone.

"With limited financial and human resources we cannot hope to provide sufficient security forces to safeguard our border with Rhodesia and His Excellency the President has, therefore, decided that we should appeal to the Security Council of the United Nations for assistance against this aggression.

"I think it is appropriate for me to appeal to the leaders in Rhodesia to forget their personal ambitions and to be sincere in their efforts to find a peaceful solution to their constitutional problem when the Geneva Conference reconvenes. Let me also say to Smith and his adherents that they are to blame for the situation in Rhodesia and not us. Their transparent efforts to find scapegoats in Botswana will not fool anyone.

"We consider it is vital that this conflict should be contained and should not be allowed to spread throughout Southern Africa. We must not allow a racial war to engulf the area. It is clear that Smith wants to drag his neighbours into his war. This must not be allowed to happen."

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In the view of my Government these hostile acts of armed aggression endanger the security of Botswana, and further constitute a serious threat to international peace and security. In the light of the foregoing, I therefore request, upon instructions from my Government, for an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider this serious situation.

(Signed) T. D. MOGAMI
Permanent Representative of Botswana
to the United Nations
