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## **Remarks by Ahmad Kathrada**

Zita Langa (MP, South Africa): Good Afternoon. As just announced by the powers that we should proceed. My name is Zita Langa. I'm a Member of Parliament from here in South Africa. I chair the Environment and Tourism community. I'm also the convener of the economy class for the ruling party in the Parliament, the ANC. What I've been asked to do is a privilege for me. I've been asked to introduce to you the speaker who's about to address us now.

The speaker who is about to address us is Ahmed Kathrada. In America, they have got Abraham Lincoln, they've got George Washington, they've got Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. In South Africa, we have amongst others, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela. These are what you call the founding fathers of our country.

Ahmed Kathrada, who is about to address us, is one of those people, whom the writer, Nikolai Ostrovsky once referred to as those who fought for freedom. He said, man's dearest life -- man's greatest position is his life. He was in the news, but once. My soul is to have no searing regrets of a cowardly past and my soul is to stay dying. I gave my life to the greatest cause of all, the cause of freedom. Ahmed Kathrada, who is about to address us, is one of such people. He joined the liberation movement at an early age, at the age of 15, and he joined the young communist leagues in the late 40s. He went to work as an activist in the Indian Congress, as well as in the broad democratic movement. He was arrested together with Mandela in the 60s and served together with Mandela, 27 years in prison.

So, we felt as the South African Government Parliament that, we should invite him to share his own perspectives. He is what we call, a Titan, in our revolution. So, without further ado, I'll hand over to Ahmed Kathrada, Thank you.

**Ahmed Kathrada:** Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman. Thank you very much for giving some of your time to listen to me. But I'm sure for most of you, it would be a light relief from the very busy, very, very hectic schedule that you've had. Just one correction Mr. Chairman, I didn't serve 27 years, I served 26. Mr. Mandela served 27.

I'm going to try to speak a little about the struggle against Apartheid, the transition in South Africa today, but I've been told that I should speak a little about our prison experience. Now, first of all people have got a wrong impression that Apartheid started in 1948. In fact, apartheid started in 1652 when the Dutch colonized the Cape Town. If any of you have been to Kirstenbosch Gardens here in Cape Town, you will still see the remainder of the hedge that Van Riebeeck had planted to keep the indigenous people out. That's where Apartheid started and successive governments of course, have carried on the policy of

Apartheid. They didn't call it Apartheid, but they carried on the policy of Apartheid right up to 1994, when the democratic government came into power.

Now, I belong to the African National Congress, of course like the chairperson here. The African National Congress was founded in the 1912, under the leadership of academics who were trained abroad, lawyers mainly and paramount chiefs and so forth. So, for the first 37 years of ANC's existence, they carried out a policy of resolutions, petitions, delegations and the response of the authorities was one of greater reprisals. 1948 was a watershed moment in our history when the nationalist party came into power. Naturally, it was all whiter, as you all know, we, who are not white, never enjoyed the vote. We voted for the first time in 1994, but this party that came into power in 1948 was a Pro-Nazi party. In fact, the minister of justice at the time that we were sentenced imprisonment, had been in a concentration camp in South Africa for supporting the Nazis. So that all their laws that they had passed since 1948 they have petitionalized, the laws that they copied from Nazi Germany.

I won't go into all the laws, but I'll mention one of the pernicious laws, called the Bantu Education Act. Now, perhaps I should tell you at this stage that Apartheid applied differently to the whites on the one side, they didn't apply to them at all, and to those who are not white. Among those who are not white, we had Indians like myself of course, born in South Africa, colored people, and of course the majority of people, the African people. All of us suffered from racial discrimination of one form or another, but applied differently. So, if you can imagine a ladder, on top of the ladder were the whites, with the vote and all the privileges that were denied to the rest of all people. Immediately under them were Indians and colored people, who enjoyed a few more rights than the African people, but of course less than the whites, and at the bottom of the ladder were the majority African people.

So, there's just one law that I want to talk about, it's called the Bantu Education Act, which applied only to the African people. Now, the minister in charge of that law had made it very clear that there is no place in white South Africa for the black people above the status of laborers. Now, you may know that white South Africa had divided the country into white and black. The majority of black, rather the whites owned 87% of the land, and they only constituted less than 15% of the population, and they regarded the rest of South Africa as 'White South Africa'.

So, the minister had said that the African people were in South Africa as laborers. Laborers don't need mathematics, they don't need the sciences. For labor purposes, you don't need them. So that we had generations of African people growing up, going to school without mathematics, without the sciences, and you may have heard the conference what a tremendous shortage we have of scientists, of mathematicians. Because even our teachers, black teachers were not equipped. They have to learn mathematics, because they were deprived, they would have to learn the sciences, because they were deprived of that education.

So that's just one of many laws and I won't go into that. So, they came into power and as I said, they brought in laws that were copied from Nazi Germany. Now, after 47 years of the African National Congress attempts at negotiations through petitions, resolutions and so forth, all that failed. In 1949, there came a radical change in the leadership of the African National Congress, the conservative leadership, who believed in the politics of petitions and resolutions, was out-voted and a younger radical leadership took over and the secretary general in 1949, who was appointed was Walter Sisulu. His name has just been mentioned by the Chairperson. He was one of the senior leaders of the African National Congress, who was with us in prison; he died a few years ago. So, he was appointed secretary, and the whole movement took a turn towards a more radical opposition to Apartheid.

So the 11.27 passed a program of action, which allowed for civil disobedience, passive resistance, boycott and so forth, which was not on the agenda of the African National Congress before then. In pursuance of this policy of passive resistance, the first action took place in a province called the Transvaal in 1950, when the people were called upon to strike and it was a peaceful strike. The police killed 18 people, innocent people, who had just gathered at meeting. So, the strike was a tremendous success. The next major campaign was the defiance campaign of 1952. Now, I should just pause here, just to clarify something. I had said that Apartheid applied differently to the different groups, but because it applied differently, we had different congresses. We had the African National Congress, we had the Indian Congress, we had the Colored Congress, because each congress faced law that applied to those particular people, but they worked in alliance.

So, the defiance campaign of 1952 was jointly run by the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress. Volunteers were called upon to defie six laws, Apartheid laws and by defying those laws, they were imprisoned. So, during that period of that campaign, about 9,000-10,000 volunteers went to prison for short periods - a month, two months, three months etc. but, instead of meeting the demands of the people, the government responded by even stricter laws, harsher laws and 20 leaders of the campaign were arrested including Mr. Mandela, Mr. Sisulu and others and they were given a suspended sentence fortunately.

In 1955, the Congresses organized a Congress of the people. The Idea was to call upon all the people of South Africa to come together to have a new constitution, which will apply for a non-racial South Africa for all the people of the country. The Congresses invited even the ruling Nationalist Party to come to the conference, of course they did not come and that conference passed what was called the Freedom Charter, which is the historic document. The principles of Freedom Charter are now part of our Constitution, which you may have had a chance to look at. Again, instead of exceeding to the demands of the people, the government arrested a 156 people and trialed them for high treason. At the end, only 30 of the 156 were charged, and that case went on for four and a half years, and even the Apartheid court found the 30 not guilty and among them was Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others.

Those people were acquitted in 1961, but in 1960 came the Sharpeville Massacre. Now, most of you may have heard of the Sharpeville Massacre. It was a peaceful demonstration led by

a sister organization of the African National Congress called the Pan Africanist Congress, whose leader was a man by the name of Robert Sobukwe. It was a peaceful demonstration against a certain law, Apartheid law, in a place called Sharpeville. The people demonstrated outside the police station and again the police opened fire and killed 69 innocent people and subsequent to that, they banned the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, so they became illegal organizations.

At that stage, The African National Congress decided to go underground and some of its most senior leaders, Oliver Tambo, J. B. Marx, Yusuf Dalu, Moses Kotane, Joe Slovo and others were sent out of the country to organize from abroad. Some of the senior leaders like Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, they stayed in the country and Mandela, of course, stayed in the country. But because now the African National Congress being banned and declared illegal, the remaining avenues of peaceful protest no longer existed. It is then that the African National Congress, under the initiative of Nelson Mandela, decided that there should be an armed wing of the ANC. The ANC leadership gave permission to Mr. Mandela to set up this armed wing called the **16.59** wing.

Recruits had to undergo training in the manufacture and planting of bombs. But they had to take an oath to stick strictly to the discipline of the African National Congress. Bombs had to be placed in Apartheid buildings all over South Africa. Post Offices, Railways, parks, everywhere you had Europeans only, Europeans only and the volunteers, the recruits had to bomb those places. But the fundamental requirement of all recruits was that those bombs had to be placed when there is no danger of injury to human beings. So, those bombs were placed at night when there were no people around.

So, at that stage Mr. Mandela had gone underground, left his home, he's a lawyer, he left his legal practice and functioned underground in South Africa. When arrest took place in 1963 in a farm called Rivonia, it was a secret farm where illegal activities were carried on and we were arrested. We don't know how the police found out but we were arrested. Mr. Mandela had been arrested before and he was sentenced to five years but he was brought back from Robben Island and joined in with us and we were charged for high treason and sabotage. Precisely because among the eight of us were four of the top leaders of the African National Congress, Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, Mhlaba. We, those of us who were also underground at that time as activists, we were all arrested together.

Now, at that time there was a law which entitled the police to detain political suspects for three months at a time and during those three months you're kept in complete isolation, not even allowed to talk to the people with whom you're arrested. The whole idea was that you were not allowed visitors, no lawyers allowed, no newspapers, no books. Just in solitary confinement for three months and during that period the whole idea was to break your spirit, so that you can give information to the police. Information about yourself, about your colleagues, about your activities.

Now, under that law, they used various tactics to get information. Ranging from psychological torture to physical torture and we reckon that between 1963 and the 80s

when it was discontinued, about 100 odd people were tortured to death. The most well known one, you may have all heard of was Steve Biko, tortured to death. Some were electrocuted, some were thrown over buildings, some were bludgeoned to death, and those who survived were charged and sent to prison. So, many of the people who landed on Robben Island and other prisons were people who went through that three month period.

So, when we finished our three month period after that interrogation, I must make it clear that we were not tortured, not physically, I was not tortured physically. I was asked questions naturally, which I refused to answer but I was not tortured, fortunately for me. After three months, we saw our lawyers for the first time. The lawyers, our own lawyers had prepared for the worst. They told us that they had enough evidence to hang us, our own lawyers told us that. So, that when we went on trial, right from the beginning, Mr. Mandela and others made it clear to us that this is a political trial, we must not apologize for our activities. We must admit our political belief, regardless of the consequences. That's what some of you may have seen the speech that Mr. Mandela made in court.

Now, when that speech was shown to some of the lawyers, one of the lawyers said, I don't want to take the case because you are asking for the death sentence, and of course in the end we managed to convince the lawyers that the only way to fight that case was as a political case, regardless of consequences. So, right up to the last day, when the judge said stand up for your sentence, the expectation among us and among our lawyers was a death sentence. There has been a recent book published about Mr. Mandela, which showed that on the night when the judge said that you're found guilty, and we all expected the death sentence, on that night, Mr. Mandela scribbled a message which he was going to read to court in case the death sentence was passed. What he was going to tell the court was that I was very proud of what I did, and given the opportunity I would do it again. Fortunately, we were sentenced to life imprisonment and none of us got the death sentence. So, there was a collective sigh of relief.

Now, there were eight of us on trial and who were sentenced. Our eighth colleague was white and in apartheid South Africa, literally from the cradle to the grave, that separation. You're born separately, you grow separately, you go to separate schools, you play separately. If you're sick, you go to hospitals or clinic separately, if clinics existed that is, and when you die, you are buried separately. So, that when we were sent to Robben Island, it was only seven of us who were sent. Our eighth colleague, Dennis Goldberg, because he was white, could not be sent to Robben Island, only prisoners who were not white were in Robben Island. He was kept with other white political prisoners in Pretoria Prison.

Now, on the night of our sentence, it was bitterly cold, we were fast asleep and we were suddenly woken up and chained and laid irons and we were put on a military plane, seven of us, and flown to Robben Island. We were the only group of prisoners who were taken to Robben Island by plane. Now, among the seven of us, I was the youngest, not the youngest on Robben Island, because we had young kids of 16 and 15, but I was the youngest of the seven, and I'm deliberately saying this, you will see why, and I was the only Indian. The reason why I'm saying so, Govan Mbeki, the late Govan Mbeki, the father of our President, was 20 years my senior, Mandela is 11 years my senior.

The first thing we had to do in prison, on a very cold winter's day, rainy, is to change into prison clothes. All my colleagues, because they were black, had to wear short trousers, right through the winter, no socks. I was given long trousers, socks, because as I said earlier, Indians and colors were treated better than the blacks, but worse than the whites.

Food, in the morning we had the same food; porridge, soup, coffee. My colleagues, because they were black were given less sugar than we were, but our sugar was less than the whites but the whites were not on Robben Island. The meat, the fish, was less than ours and ours was less than the whites. So, Robben Island was a microcosm of how apartheid applied in the rest of South Africa.

So, from the word go it was a struggle against this inequality, struggle for equality and so forth. How do you struggle in prison? You make your demands, you make your representations and eventually you have your hunger strike. So, the first hunger strike took place about two years after we came to prison. It was a combination of pressures; the pressure of the prisoners, the struggle outside, and since you are from foreign countries, I must point out, it was the solidarity and support of civil society, from throughout the world, that helped us, not governments, I must make that clear.

Unfortunately, I have to mention something that's not fashionable these days but it's part of our history. The only governments that supported us were the communist countries; Soviet Union, China, Cuba, East Germany, they trained our soldiers, they supplied arms to our soldiers. India and the Scandinavian countries provided humanitarian aid, because we had camps, training camps in Africa. Our soldiers and **27:17** in schools, so all kids and our soldiers had to be fit, they had to get uniform, clothing, et cetera, and that is where the Scandinavian countries and India provided humanitarian aid.

African countries, they were just starting to get their independence, but they were a tremendous help, as poor as they were. They gave us as much assistance as possible, and some of the African countries like Uganda, Tanzania, etc, we had military camps as well. So, that was how we spent our years in prison, I won't go into detail. We worked with pick and shovels, all of you know what pick and shovels are, but what I want to say at this stage is soon after we arrived on Robben Island, Mr. Mandela was called by the authorities and he was told we are prepared to exempt you from work, we're also prepared to give you clothes like the rest, and we're prepared to give you food like the rest, he refused. All the leaders of the ANC who were with us refused special treatment, they said, we want equality for all our people, we don't want to be singled out. So, even when we had hunger strikes, our leaders refused to be exempted, they joined the hunger strike, and that was a great inspiration to the rest of us.

After 18 years on Robben Island, all of us were transferred to a prison in Cape Town and that is where Mr. Mandela started the negotiation process with the other side, because right from the start we knew that our struggle, even our arm struggle, is not going to end in a military victory, the South African army was too strong for that. Even though we had thousands of trained soldiers we could not beat the enemy. The whole aim of our struggle

was to get a negotiated settlement, because first of all, we believed right from the start in a non-racial democratic South Africa. So, we had three million whites at that time, three-and-a-half million whites, you can't drown three-and-a-half million whites into the sea. After we have won the struggle, they are going to stay in South Africa.

So, ours was a non-racial struggle and that is why we opted for a negotiated settlement. It was not a military victory, it was a negotiated victory. We would have won the struggle in any case but it would have taken a lot of bloodshed, it would have taken many more years, but because our leadership, the African National Congress, decided that we must have a negotiated settlement, which would guarantee rights for the first Interim Constitution for five years, guarantee that jobs that people had and so forth, which is a detail we won't go into now. The retrospect, of course that worked, but Mr. Mandela started the negotiation process from prison. He first met the civil servants, then met the Ministers of the cabinet, eventually he met the two Presidents and persuaded them. His point was, we are prisoners, prisoners don't negotiate. You must negotiate with the African National Congress in exile. Allow the exiles to come back. Unbend the African National Congress and other organizations. Free, release all political prisoners and let us talk.

Eventually the government accepted that, released political prisoners, and of course the negotiation started. Many people ask now, ask Mr. Mandela particularly, how come you spent 27 years in prison, you're not bitter, you're not full of revenge or hatred? The reply was very simple, we stand for a non-racial, gender equal, South Africa. After the dust of struggle is settled, we are still going to live with our compatriots. So, you can't have an anti-white struggle, we are believing in a non-racial struggle, and that is part of our constitution, that was agreed upon. It's a constitution which stands for a non-racial, gender equal, democratic South Africa.

I want to end by, what have we achieved? I'm not going to go into details of water and lights and the houses and all that we have built, there are lot of statistics, but what I want to say, that we went to the Western Countries for assistance. They refused, the governments refused, civil society supported us. Two of the leaders of the Western Country said Mandela is a terrorist, the ANC is a terrorist organization, they refused to help us. That is why we had to turn to the Communist Countries for help. So, when we talk about terrorism, we have to be very careful, we were called terrorists. Many of our people suffered greatly, death and torture and all that because they were called terrorists. So, we are very careful in using the word terrorist, because one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. So, we're always conscious of that.

What have we achieved? We have achieved dignity. Dignity for the millions of oppressed people, for 350 years, deprived of the dignity as human beings, suffering the worse type of humiliation. We have given dignity to our people. We have won liberty, liberty for our white compatriots, because they too, although they were ruling the country, they had rights but they were insecure people. They were living in fear all the time. They were ashamed to go with a South African passport to other countries because civil society looked down upon them. We have given them liberty. We have got gender equality like never before.

If you go to our parliament, you see our cabinet, you see our ambassadors, large number of females, it was just not there before. When we came to Parliament in 1994, in the previous parliament there were only I think six or less female. So, the washing -- toilet facilities were on the fourth floor, when we came to Parliament with many, many more female, they had to make all those adjustments. So, we have provided gender equality.

We have provided freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, which wasn't there before. We have provided freedom of religion, because even under the laws, there was no religious freedom, there was apartheid even in the churches, different buildings and so forth, you couldn't join any church that you liked, you had to join a black church, an Indian church, a colored church. We have provided and protected religious freedom. So, when you look at the constitution of South Africa and look back to 1994, April, we can look back with great pride at what we have achieved over the years, and these are some of the things that I have just outlined. I want to stop Mr. Chairman and see if there are any questions about any? Well, thank you very much.

**Moderator:** Thank you very much. I'm not so sure, are there any more minutes to give to the session, ten minutes for questions maybe. Okay, you can ask questions here. Yes sir.

**Audience:** Thank you for these very inspiring words. I'm interested in an experience which is almost unique in its success in South Africa, that's a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Can we have some of your assessment of its successes or failures, would you do it differently if it were to be done all over again, and tell us a little more about the work that you're doing for the memory? How can you -- how are you managing the memory of the times of apartheid through the museum that apparently you're chairing, how does that work?

**Ahmed Kathrada:** Well, let's answer the first question first. We have said that while we will never forget the atrocities of apartheid that is part of our history. We must remember that so that future generations will not make the same mistake, but we may have to look forward. We can't build a country on the foundations of continuously looking back and blaming our past. We know we have inherited a legacy of massive hunger, unemployment, homelessness, millions of children without school, we have had that, and we know apartheid was responsible for that but we have to look forward. While we remember and while we will not forget apartheid and its atrocities, we will have to look forward. We have to have a policy of reconciliation.

As you may know, when Mr. Mandela became President of South Africa, on the basis of reconciliation, one of the first things he did, he invited the widows and wives of former apartheid leaders to tea. The widow of Dr. Verwoerd, who was the architect of apartheid, she was ill, she couldn't come. So, Mr. Mandela got into his helicopter, went to her house, as in the spirit of reconciliation.

So, I can go on, but when you come to the Truth Commission, The Truth Commission had a policy of reconciliation. We invited victims to come forward. We invited both the traitors to come forward. The Truth Commission provided that if local traitors can prove to the

Commission that what they did was in perseverance of a political objective by the government and that they satisfy the criteria, they be given amnesty. Those who refused to come, who didn't -- some of them were tried, some of them are in prison. What we did not want to do is a repetition of the Nuremberg trials, we didn't want that, because if we had arrested and charged and jailed with perpetrators of apartheid, it would mean perpetuation of hatred, of revenge, and we don't want that. Truth Commission, historians will be able to assess whether it's successful or not, we think it has made a great contribution towards reconciliation, but it's a bit too early, history will tell. I am confident that history will vindicate the Truth Commission, but it will be sometime before that happens.

**Moderator:** Yes sir.

**Robert Corbin:** Thank you very much, I'm Robert Corbin from Guyana. First of all, I'd like to again commend the leadership of the ANC and all the fighters who brought liberation to South Africa. Indeed, I, as a young man felt very emotionally attached to this struggle all the way in Guyana, South America. I recall us writing and asking whether we could actually come and physically fight. We got a very interesting message that we have all the manpower, we needed just material support. My question now is, having come true with this struggle to this point, as many societies have faced, you may have the problem of rising expectation, because people who have been suffering on apartheid might have felt that once the ANC is in government, then all the problems will be solved; housing, rising, the standard of living and a number of other social amenities. How are you dealing with the problem of high expectations and a gap between those high expectations and what the economy can now afford?

**Ahmed Kathrada:** This is a very good question. We know of course that in every struggle, the people, the victims have high expectations. The day after the elections in 1994, people were saying, where are our houses, where is electricity, where is water? If you go into statistics, we built three million houses, we have provided electricity, running water, sanitation, to millions of people, but we have a long way to go, we have a long way to go still.

So, materially and from the point of view of attitudes, changes are taking place. The miracle is not so much April 1994, the miracle is the patience of our people. Expectations are there, as fast as we build houses, as fast as we provide electricity, the demands increase, because one of the -- and as you all know, one of our major problems is illegal immigration. We've got a 3,000 kilometer borders. During the apartheid days there were men by the army to keep out freedom fighters coming in with guns, now we don't have that border control anymore, not strict. So, tens of thousands of illegal people are coming to South Africa, we don't know the numbers. So, we have to provide, we have to provide employment, houses, et cetera, for our own people, and now we don't even know who is an illegal immigrant anymore.

So, our problems are increasing as far as provision to the most needy is concerned, but as I say, and we have to repeat that, we have gone some way, we have gone quite a way towards providing the neediest of the needy, but I must emphasize that we have a long way to go

still. We are confident that with the policy of the organization, with this leadership, we will succeed.

**Moderator:** I'll take the last three hands; one, two, three, four.

**Audience:** Senator Supplicity from Brazil, I would like to congratulate, and thank you so much for such an inspiring conference, Mr. Ahmed Kathrada. Consistent with all the steps that you have mentioned in the history of the end of the apartheid struggle and the struggle to have Africa equal for everyone, no matter; origin, age, race, color, or socio-economic condition. It's common sense that in Africa, in South Africa there is a very strong movement, the coalition for a basic movement with the same organizations behind that were in favor of the end of the apartheid, such as the Black Sash, the Congress of Idren's entitlement of social security, the gender advocacy program, the Southern African Catholics Bishops and 32 organizations.

Well, in Brazil, we are struggling for a citizen's basic income, the lack of everyone to participate in the wealth of the Nation. A law was already approved in this direction. Since it would be difficult to introduce it from day to night, the law says that it will go step by step, starting with those most in need until -- while in South Africa you already have a universalization of the right to be old, to get a dividend or an income. To what extent will you consider consistent with the objectives of the ANC, of President Nelson Mandela and yourself, that in South Africa you also in a certain time, you prepare all the steps to have the right of anyone to have basic income, as the right to everyone to participate in the wealth of the nation, unconditionally, in my view consistent with all the struggle that you've mentioned? Thank you very much, congratulations.

**Audience:** Member of Parliament from India's upper house. I will sacrifice my question for somebody else, I just want to salute you for whatever you did, and to ask you remember Aung San Suu Kyi who is in jail for 17 years in Burma.

**Lucia Burneo:** My name is Lucia Burneo, Member of Parliament from the Republic of Ecuador. I am very thankful for your speech and also for having the opportunity to be invited here, because I am fairly convinced that democracy and development go hand in hand. Therefore, I want to express here to all of you my concern about the current situation in Ecuador. Also, in the globalized world, I think we should be watching for democracy because democracy is something we should really keep for the peace of the world. I am worried for the situation in Ecuador where 57 members of parliament including myself have been legally dismissed from tribunal elections, with support of the government and the Ministry of Interior Security for having voted, supposedly voted, in parliament for something that we did not vote. So, this is an illegal act and I am mainly at concern for my personal integrity, not only as a woman but as human rights are really in danger. So, I really ask for the support to see that democracy in a region like South America must be maintained, and hopefully to have your support to get security of members of parliament that belong to the Network, thank you. I am looking for your support, thank you.

**Audience:** Thank you. I am a Member of Parliament from Kenya. I want to say, we as Kenyans are very proud of South Africans, we share their struggle, we felt the suffering of the people of this country. Now, South Africa is now considered an economic power house in this part of the world, in Africa. Are you satisfied of the aspirations, the objectives, the mission of the ANC, been achieved so far? Noting that there is ever increasing gap between the rich and the poor, is there any affirmative action that you, as one of the founding fathers, will take to ensure that poor people in this country, I mean actually other parts of Africa are taken care of? Finally, is there chance because Africans have been very disappointed, their regional vision of fighting for independence was betrayed by the original founding fathers of various nations from the word go in the 60s, and a lot of these African governments turn to dictatorship, are you satisfied that South Africa would not follow that path? Thank you.

**Ahmed Kathrada:** Well, thank you very much. I don't think there were any questions that were asked really except for the Kenya question, but thank you very much for the comments that I have heard and I'm glad that I've been able to convey some of our experiences to this, and thank you for spending your time to listen to me here.

Now, as for the question that what guarantee have we got that South Africa will not go the same way as some of the countries that Africa have gone. I don't want to comment, it's not my preference really to comment about what happens in other countries, but I am very confident that South Africa is on the right road, that is we have got enough checks and balances, we've got a very strong constitution which is hailed throughout the world. We've got the constitutional court which is often found against our government, and our government has accepted the findings of the constitution court. We've got various institutions within government to ensure that our country does not deviate from the path that we have set upon. So, I'm quite confident -- and also to point out that in the African National Congress there is not one leader who decides things, it is a collective leadership that decides on policy and that ensures that policy is carried out, so there is no danger of a dictatorship in South Africa at all. We've got enough checks and balances against that, that's what I tried to say.