

# STATEMENT DISCOURS

SECRETARY  
OF STATE  
FOR EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS.

SECRÉTAIRE  
D'ÉTAT AUX  
AFFAIRES  
EXTÉRIEURES.



STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, THE HONOURABLE  
MITCHELL SHARP, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OF THE DEATH OF CANADIAN TOURISTS AT  
ZAMBIAN/RHODESIAN BORDER, MAY 15, 1973.

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Mr. Speaker, in order to inform the House, and the Canadian public, of developments to this date concerning the death of two Canadian girls on the Zambian/Rhodesia border, I wish to table, in both official languages, a statement on this tragic matter.

This statement sets out the facts of this tragedy as we know them. I wish to quote from, and thereby draw the attention of Honourable Members to, the conclusion of the statement: "The situation now is that our strong and persistent representations to the Zambian Government have resulted in expressions of regret and apologies, which I have no doubt are sincere, and an offer of ex gratia payments to the families of the slain girls. We appreciate these indications of their concern. The Zambian Government has not denied that the shots came from their guards but it has maintained that the sentry or sentries acted in accordance with their duty in the circumstances as they saw them. We do not consider that there is evidence of a threat to Zambian installations which would justify the prolonged shooting which resulted in the deaths of two innocent Canadian girls. As long as this major difference remains between our view of what happened and the view of the Zambian Government, we cannot consider the matter closed. Our stand all along has been that it is the responsibility of the Zambian Government to carry out investigations and produce explanations that will satisfy reasonable Canadian opinion."

I have instructed our High Commissioner in Lusaka, Mr. Broadbridge, to present the text of the statement I am tabling to the Zambian authorities.

STATEMENT TABLED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO THE ZAMBIAN AUTHORITIES

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I would like to review for the information of the House developments to this date concerning the death of two Canadian girls on the Zambian/Rhodesia border.

On May 16, 1973, the Department of External Affairs learned by telegram from our Embassy in Cape Town, South Africa, that Miss Christine Louise Sinclair of Guelph, Ontario, and Miss Marjan Drijber of Rockwood, Ontario, had been fired on by Zambian troops at the Rhodesian/Zambian border near Victoria Falls. Miss Sinclair reportedly was killed instantly. Miss Drijber had been hit by bullets and had fallen into the Zambezi River. Her body had not as yet been recovered.

The next of kin were notified immediately of these facts by the Department of External Affairs. The parents were assured that Canadian diplomatic representatives in the area would do whatever was possible to assist the families of the young women. Mr. Oscar Drijber indicated that he would personally fly to the area. He was informed that Canadian representatives were prepared to do whatever was required on his behalf if Mr. Drijber wished to avoid such a long trip under these distressing circumstances. Mr. Drijber was also informed about the political tension

existing between Rhodesia and Zambia so that he would be aware beforehand of possible difficulties he might encounter.

I instructed the Canadian High Commissioner in Lusaka, Zambia, to have the First Secretary, Mr. M. Leith, proceed immediately to Rhodesia to do whatever was possible to aid in the recovering of the bodies of the dead girls; to assist in carrying out the wishes of the next of kin regarding funeral arrangements; and to try to obtain the facts as to what actually took place on May 15. The Canadian High Commissioner in Lusaka was instructed to approach the Zambian authorities immediately to obtain assurances that a full and satisfactory investigation of the tragic incident would be carried out.

On May 18 the Zambian Government issued a communiqué which in essence admitted that a sentry on guard duty at a power station in the fourth gorge of the Zambezi River had fired upon the two young Canadians and their two companions, Mr. and Mrs. Crothers of the United States, because the sentry believed they were swimming across the Zambezi River on a mission to attack the Zambian power station.

I informed the House of Commons on May 22 that the Canadian authorities were awaiting Mr. Leith's findings. On May 23 I informed the House of Commons that "We have not accepted the Zambian explanation and this is one of the reasons we are making the investigation". In answer to questions from the press, I reiterated on May 24 that the Canadian Government was not "satisfied with the explanation" contained in the May 18 Zambian communiqué and that the High Commissioner, Mr. Broadbridge, was instructed to convey the findings of Mr. Leith to the Zambian Government.

On May 24 I informed the House that the Canadian High Commission in Lusaka had been told to "once again contact the Zambian authorities at a very high level to make clear to them that we are treating this matter very seriously indeed, and that we wish the fullest possible investigation to be continued. We are not satisfied with the public statement that has been made and we have received no direct communication from the Zambian Government."

On May 28 I tabled a letter from the Zambian Foreign Minister conveying deep-felt condolences to the Government and people of Canada and to the bereaved families of the two Canadian girls. On May 29 the Canadian Mission in Lusaka was instructed once again to inform the Zambian Government of strong Canadian concern and to point out that there was no evidence that the tourists were acting in a way to create suspicion. The Prime Minister sent a personal message to President Kaunda of Zambia on May 29 emphasizing Canadian concern over this tragic incident.

On May 31 I again reported to the House of Commons and informed the House of the main points on which Mr. Leith's findings and the evidence of the American couple who survived the shooting differed from the Zambian explanation. There was no evidence of provocation for the shooting; no evidence of the girls being in the water; no evidence that any of the party were wearing bandoliers or waterproof gear; and there was evidence of firing by more than one gun at more than one location.

Our High Commissioner in Lusaka saw President Kaunda over the June 2-3 weekend to emphasize the continuing concern of the Canadian Government. On June 4 President Kaunda sent a message to Prime Minister Trudeau conveying apologies and expressing his personal grief and sorrow concerning the May 15 deaths.

A special envoy went to Zambia at the beginning of June, as the House was informed on June 5. This was a Canadian who knew the President of Zambia personally and was particularly fitted to convey to him the depth of Canadian concern about the situation. That was the reason for sending him. On June 7 President Kaunda gave this envoy personal letters to deliver to Mr. and Mrs. Drijber and Reverend and Mrs. Sinclair, copies of which I tabled on June 11. President Kaunda's letters said, in part:

"I am writing to tell you of the deep personal grief which I have felt, and which is shared by the people of Zambia, at the tragic death of your daughter. The people of Zambia join with me in expressing deep regret at her death. ...as an indication of my country's deep regret at the loss you have sustained and of the esteem we feel toward the Canadian people, I am asking my government officials to discuss with the Canadian High Commission in Zambia the question of ex gratia payment to you. I hope that you will accept this gesture as a further expression of my deep sympathy and that of the Zambian nation".

On June 12 Mr. Drijber asked the Canadian Embassy in South Africa for assistance in obtaining a personal interview with President Kaunda. This was arranged, through our High Commissioner in Lusaka for June 20, at which time the President once again offered his sympathy and apology. A meeting was also arranged with Zambian defence officials and Mr. Drijber was taken by Zambian Government aircraft to visit the Zambian side of the gorge. Later he crossed the border to Rhodesia.

Mr. and Mrs. Drijber indicated after their return to Canada on July 4 that they would like to meet with me and officials of my Department contacted them to arrange a date on my return from Europe. The meeting took place on Thursday, July 12.

I have also received a letter from a lawyer representing the parents of Christine Sinclair requesting discussions about the ex gratia payment offered by President Kaunda.

The situation now is that our strong and persistent representations to the Zambian Government have resulted in expressions of regret and apologies, which I have no doubt are sincere, and an offer of ex gratia payments to the families of the slain girls. We appreciate these indications of their concern. The Zambian Government has not denied that the shots came from their guards but it has maintained that the sentry or sentries acted in accordance with their duty in the circumstances as they saw them. We do not consider that there is evidence of a threat to Zambian installations which would justify the prolonged shooting which resulted in the deaths of two innocent Canadian girls. As long as this major difference remains between our view of what happened and the view of the Zambian Government, we cannot consider the matter closed. Our stand all along has been that it is the responsibility of the Zambian Government to carry out investigations and produce explanations that will satisfy reasonable Canadian opinion.