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AFFIDAVIT

I, the undersigned

RUTH ESTELLE BECKER

DO HEREBY MAKE OATH AND SAY that -

1. I am an adult female student at present residing at 77 van der Linde Road, Bedfordview.
 2. Save where appears from the context the facts deposed to herein are within my own personal knowledge.
 3. I am a friend of Mr. Auret van Heerden who is presently being detained under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act at John Vorster Square.
 4. To date I have visited Auret van Heerden ^{four} three times in detention. All three visits took place at John Vorster Square, permission having been granted by one Captain van Rensburg on the basis of my friendship with Mr. van Heerden.
 5. The first visit took place at 11 a.m. on the 18th December 1981. The visit lasted for one hour during which a security policeman by the name of Herbert remained in the office. During the visit Major Cronwright and Warrant Officer Patou came in and out of the office from time to time. I was sitting very close to Auret facing him. Auret had his back to Herbert. Herbert sat behind the desk
- [Handwritten signature]*

working, and at one stage was speaking on the telephone, during which time Auret said to me "I have been quite badly tortured". He also told me that he had been at Pretoria Central Prison and had been placed in a cell in which, if he stretched out his arm when lying on the bed, he could touch the opposite wall. Later in the conversation he referred again to torture, saying that some of the security policemen who had tortured him had come to respect him now because of the way he had taken the torture.

6. The second visit occurred on the 5th January 1982 at noon. The security policeman who was present during this visit stayed in the room, sitting in a chair next to the desk, while I sat almost parallel to him facing Auret, who sat in front of the desk. I cannot recall any reference to torture during this visit.
7. The third visit occurred at 9 a.m. on February 1st, 1982. I was taken to an office with Warrant Officer Patou when Auret was brought in handcuffed by a Black man. This man left, leaving Warrant Officer Patou in the office. Warrant Officer Patou was sitting behind the desk working. I had my back to him facing Auret who in turn was facing Warrant Officer Patou. Warrant Officer Patou called a Black man to sit in the office while he went out. At this stage Auret told me that he had been taken to

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Benoni, because "it is quieter there". Auret told me that he had had his handcuffs chained to his leg iron and was made to stand that way for eleven hours. He said that a wet bag had been put over his head and he had been given electric shocks at the same time. He said that he had heard of "the bag" and electric shocks but never of the two being given together. He said that he had also been kicked and punched. He said "When they had me on that floor I thought I was going to die. I thought they are not going to believe me and I am going to die".

8. During my third visit to Auret, he also told me that Neil Aggett was in a cell across the corridor from him. He said that Neil had been taken out of his cell three days earlier and brought back early that morning. He said that Neil had not taken his breakfast that morning.
9. Throughout the period described above I have been in constant contact with Auret's father, Mr. Dennis van Heerden. I have also been in contact with Mr. van Heerden's legal advisers and have reported the allegations of torture to them.
10. I have ^{given} Mr. van Heerden an undertaking that I would not make any official complaints about Auret's maltreatment without first consulting Mr. van Heerden. I have been advised by Mr. van Heerden and his legal advisers that it is not certain whether a court would grant an interdict

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restraining the security police from assaulting Auret. The court would only have my evidence on which to judge the situation and this evidence would no doubt be denied by the security police. Furthermore, I had no reason to believe that Auret would be assaulted in the future. My impression was that the security police had tortured Auret in order to extract information from him, but would not torture him again as they already had the information they required. Accordingly, there was no impending danger which would be prevented by an interdict. I was advised that even if an interdict were granted, there was no method of enforcing the order since nobody other than the Minister and policemen acting in the course of their official duties were entitled to access to detainees held under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. Thus, if they had the mind to do so, the security police could ignore the interdict.

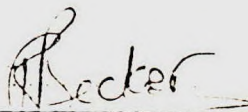
11. After discussions with Mr. van Heerden, I agreed not to report the allegations to any official of the security police as I believed that this would not serve any purpose and may even have adverse consequences. I would see no use in reporting allegations of torture to the alleged perpetrators of that torture.

12. I was concerned that if the security police discovered that Auret had made these allegations, they would victimise him either by further assaults or by the



withdrawal of those privileges that he was currently enjoying. I was also concerned that I may be refused further visits to Auret if it were discovered that he had given me this information. I also did not wish to jeopardise the visiting privileges that had been granted to Auret's mother and father.

13. I have no reason to doubt the allegations made by Auret concerning his treatment by the security police.



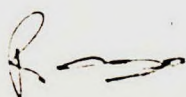
SIGNED AND SWORN TO AT JOHANNESBURG on this the *24TH*.
day of February 1982, the Deponent having acknowledged
that she knows and understands the contents of this Affidavit.

BEFORE ME



COMMISSIONER OF OATHS

ANDREW JAMES SIMPSON SEBBA
Commissioner of Oaths
Ex Officio
Commissioned Officer S.A.D.F.
45 Main Street, Johannesburg 2001



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AGGETT, Dr Neil, Inquest, 1982

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