

# Ruth First's death rekindles claim of anti-ANC hit list

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**SOUTH** African exile Ruth First was at least the fifth member of the political wing of the African National Congress assassinated in neighbouring states in the past two years.

Car bombs, parcel bombs and ambushes have been deployed against those connected to the banned ANC in Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and Mozambique.

Professor First (59), an internationally-respected academic and author of books ranging from the biography of Olive Schreiner to an analysis of military coup in Africa, was killed on Tuesday when she opened a letter bomb addressed to her at the Centre of African Studies in Maputo.

She was married to South African Communist Party member, Joe Slovo, but was not a member herself, close friends revealed. She was also not involved in "organising revolutionary activity," they said.

She was a vociferous opponent of apartheid and was one of the first people detained under South Africa's security legislation. She left the country in 1964.

According to the Mozambique Government news agency Aim, the letter bomb arrived to coincide with a gathering of international academics. The bomb destroyed her office and injured fellow scholar Aquino de Braganca.

Anti-apartheid movements have blamed "agents of the South African Government", although the head of the Security Police,

General Johan Coetzee, has flatly denied any involvement.

Aim has released a list of assassinated and maimed ANC members, accusing SA of being responsible.

On the list are:

● 1974: Abraham Tiro, former secretary of the

South African Students' Organisation, killed by parcel bomb in Botswana; John Dube, Deputy representative of the ANC in Zambia, killed in Lusaka plus three others injured.

● 1978: ANC member Ablom Duma injured by bomb in post office box in Swaziland; ANC members, John Majola and Willie Nyoni ambushed in a truck in Swaziland — Majola presumed dead or kidnapped.

● 1979: South African exile Phyllis Naidoo injured by a parcel bomb in Maseru — three others injured.

● 1980: ANC member Patrick Makuu killed when two houses of refugees in Manzini were blown up; car bomb destroyed house of ANC's Thembo Hani.

● 1981: SA commando unit attacked three ANC houses in Mozambique killing 13; Joe Gqabi, chief Zim-

babwe representative of the ANC shot dead.

● 1982: Bomb destroys London ANC office; ANC representative in Swaziland, Petrus Nyawose, and wife Jabu killed by car bomb in Manzini; Ruth First, killed in Mozambique.

The assassinations — and the attempts — have never been pinned to anyone.

Commenting on Abraham Tiro's death, a police spokesman in Botswana said that all they could establish was that it was "a letter bomb. The rubber stamp was not South African, but they believed it had been posted by South African agents.

"Tiro was one of the most wanted men in South Africa," the spokesman said.

Asked if special security was contemplated for South African refugees, he replied "No one can give any guarantees."

Growing numbers of SA refugees are causing problems to the Southern African governments committed to housing them. Conservative estimates put their number in Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique at about 1000.

Swaziland refugees have been warned to steer clear of political activities — an unusual request, since most are there because of their political feelings.

The warning came from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Swaziland Emmanuel Owuso who said there was no special security for refugees in other countries.

Judging from Mozambique anger at the death of Professor First far-reaching security proposals are likely.