

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE CENTRE OF AFRICAN STUDIES ON THE MURDER OF
RUTH FIRST

We, the colleagues and friends of Ruth First at the Centre of African Studies, wish to express our grief and outrage at her murder.

Ruth was a revolutionary intellectual who worked to produce a social science which is not just a reflection of Southern African society but an instrument for its transformation. In 1978 she was offered a unique opportunity to carry out scientific work that was also political in Mozambique - a country which had won its independence through armed struggle and has committed itself to constructing a socialist society.

Together with her close friend and colleague, the Director of the Centre, Aquino de Braganca, Ruth was a moving force in establishing at the Centre a different concept of social science research and teaching linked to the real problems of transforming the heritage of colonial exploitation. Ruth sought to promote forms of intellectual work which broke with traditional academic practices. The Centre's approach is collective and also involves novel entrance criteria and novel forms of participation by students in the research projects which are integral to the Development Course.

At the same time the position of Mozambique in the Southern African regional context was never forgotten. Inspired by Ruth an important part of the Centre's work involves keeping abreast of the strategies of Apartheid South Africa and, more recently, has sought to produce research relevant to the advancement of the objectives of SADCC. Ruth was a leading force in the promotion of collaboration between progressive social scientists throughout the region. The last major activity in which she was involved was the organisation of an UNESCO conference on social science priorities in Southern Africa.

Ruth knew that the implementation of such new styles of work would not be easy. She anticipated that these would produce contradictions and even conflicts. Yet she saw this as a necessary and positive process. The resolution of these intellectual and political issues would advance our collective understanding and open up fresh perspectives for creative work.

The work of the Centre of African Studies depended heavily on Ruth and her organising abilities. Her drive, stamina, zest and imagination and the force of her personality were largely responsible for making the Centre what it is today. She will be sorely missed. Indeed it was precisely the force of Ruth's ideas and the power of her politics which threatened the enemies of liberation in the region. Ruth was murdered by people for whom this type of scientific work, the vision of a research for the people, was a profound threat. They responded by silencing her. But they cannot destroy what she fought for. Ruth's work has laid the foundation which will enable the Centre to continue. We, the members of the Centre of African Studies, declare for all to know that **the murder of Ruth First has reinforced our determination to continue and advance the work for which she both lived and died.**

A luta continua
AMANDLA NGAWETHU.