

# **SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**

## **AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL DETAINEES**

**(FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, 1987)**

We, members of a special consultation of the Catholic Church, gathered at Hammanskraal to assess the present state of affairs in our country, want to send a message to all detainees. It is clear to us that our country has seldom witnessed such a wave of repression and such an extensive denial of basic human rights. We condemn this in the strongest possible terms and accuse the present South African government of a serious abuse of power. This is evident in the number of people who are detained, in the failure to give them access to due process, and most distressingly, the detention of children. We can find no justification for this continuing inhuman oppression and we warn that it is a measure that does great damage for the present and the future.

To all of you in detention we send the assurance of our solidarity in your suffering. In your struggle for the liberation of all the people you have been willing to sacrifice your own freedom. In condemning violence and injustice we admire and support you. We recognise in your suffering, especially those of you who have been physically assaulted and who suffer solitary confinement, a very important contribution to our struggle for liberation. We will continue the work that you have been doing and we will continue to give all the support we can to your friends and relatives. To our brothers and sisters in detention we promise our prayers and whatever pastoral care we can give.

We are particularly concerned about those of you who are children and we are encouraged by the news that some adults in detention do try to take care of the children.

We will also continue to work for your freedom and we pray that God our Father will give us the wisdom, courage and strength to work continuously for the liberation of our country.

**Yours in Christ,**

Bishop W.F. Napier OFM (President SACBC)  
Owen Cardinal McCann  
Archbishop D.E. Hurley OMI  
Bishop R Orsmond (Vice-President SACBC)  
N. Bruyns  
Bishop M. Rowland OFM  
Bishop M. Coleman  
Bishop J.L. Brinninkmeijer OP  
Archbishop P. Butelezi OMI  
Bishop H. Lenhof SAC  
Bishop P. Nkhumishe  
Bishop D. Verstaete OMI  
Archbishop S. Naidoo C.SsR  
Archbishop G. Daniel

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Professor B. Gaybba  
Sister Cecilia Smit OP  
Father E. Farrelly SDB  
N. Malatjie  
J. Boulle  
Father Albert Nolan OP

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**Signed on the occasion of a Special Consultation of the Catholic Church in  
March 1987, at Hammanskraal.**