

SACBC ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD CALL FOR PEACE AND TOLERANCE (6/11/92)

The Administrative Board of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference meeting in Pretoria from 3-6 November 1992 issued the following statement:

Day in and day out, month in and month out, the violence that is wreaking havoc with our country continues. The situation in many parts of Natal is already tantamount to civil war. The train violence continues on the Reef. Gunmen continue to terrorise and kill people in their very homes in the Vaal area. At times it appears as if the violence is turned on and off as one regulates water flowing from a tap. Just how much more loss of life are we going to tolerate?

To end the current situation of tragedy and crisis that faces our country requires something of all of us. Of our political leaders it calls for a statesmanship, which rises above all personal ambition and party political interests. No leader worthy of respect can be party to selfish bickering and recriminations. People are being killed. Every effort must be made to come together to seek jointly a solution to the error and death that plagues our land.

Early in the year, Bishop Stanley Mogoba of the Methodist Church put forward the idea of a multiparty security force. The proposal now has the backing of others. It certainly does seem to have the potential to help bring the situation in Natal under control and must be explored thoroughly. To reject the concept out of hand or to put forward all sorts of preconditions must raise serious questions about a commitment to ending the killing that is taking place. The lesson that can be drawn from the events following the elections in Angola is that the security forces need to be united as early as possible. This is an added reason for taking this proposal seriously.

One cannot overstress the urgency for our political leaders to move as rapidly as possible to an election, which will bring into being a democratic body to draw up a new constitution for our country. The longer the delay, the worse the economy will get and the longer peace and stability will be denied the people of South Africa.

The Southern African catholic Bishops' Conference joins with all others who call for the strengthening of the National Peace Accord and all other initiatives for the promotion of justice and peace in our land and commits itself to whatever greater efforts in this regard are required of it.

During the season of Advent, as we prepare for Christmas, we will, in all our Catholic churches throughout the country, encourage special prayers for tolerance and peace.

At this time, as we move towards the season of Christmas, we appeal to all people of goodwill to commit themselves to the promotion of tolerance and peace at home, at work and in the wider community.