

**SACBC ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD STATEMENT:
A PLEA FOR AN END TO VIOLENCE (20/5/91)**

The administrative Board of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference met to discuss the violence that is sweeping our country and expressed their grief for those who are suffering:

'Families are shattered because people have been brutally killed or injured. Communities are shattered because houses are burnt or broken down. People fear to move about freely because of possible attacks. The level of terror and pain that innocent people are suffering daily, touches us deeply. To you the victims of this violence, we express our deep concern and our profound sympathy. We also share your frustration at not being able to end the violence.

In the name of Almighty God, in the name of all victims of violence, and in the name of all peace-loving people in South Africa, we condemn most strongly all who attack others under the pretext of self-defence or in the name of so-called justice. We condemn even more strongly any leaders who incite people to commit violence.

If peace is to come about, it is necessary that a moratorium be accepted on the carrying of traditional weapons in public. It is equally required that owners of firearms must not carry these in public, much less use them to attack others. It even more urgent that any anonymous force instigating violence be identified and brought to justice.

The violence inherent in the politics of apartheid has left us with a deadly culture of violence. This must be replaced by a culture of peace. Let all men and women in this country listen to the commandment ringing out from the Old and the Testament:

You shall not kill!

Love your neighbour as you love yourself!

Love your enemies

We call on every person in this country to promote a spirit of tolerance and co-operation in each neighbourhood and between neighbourhoods. We are aware that there are some among you who are fearful of what the future may bring. We urge all to talk to one another, to respect different opinions and to join hands to protect the dignity and life of each person.

We sympathise with those of you who have suffered over a long period of time from lack of basic essentials, like food and shelter, education and employment. Your problems must be listened to and addressed. We understand your frustration at this time when your expectations are rising but progress seems so slow.

May the Spirit of light and love inspire and guide every one of us to do our share to bring about a justice and peace for all through a process of negotiation, which is aimed at shaping a new South Africa. Negotiations will either never begin, or be bound to fail, unless the present climate of violence is speedily brought to an end. Let all men and women of goodwill join in prayer and action to bring this about. This is our plea'.