# SACBC DEPLORES CONTINUOUS VIOLENCE (12/10/96)

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference is weary of speaking out in condemnation of massacres in our beloved country. We are at a lost for words. We have waited for some enlightening information from the SA Government and APLA. Alas, only justification and defence.

Even if only one person were killed, it would be too much. We are outraged at this despicable and brutal massacre of five youths. All evidence indicates that the occupants, however old they were, offered no resistance. We have been told that not a single shot was fired. So brutal was the murder that it appears they were shot at point blank range. Clearly the apparent motive was to kill not to arrest.

*The Citizen* newspaper says that this was neither thuggery nor terrorism. What we know is that brutal massacre was sanctioned by no less than the State President. He above all should know that we are poised on a knife-edge in our delicate negotiation process. It is incredible that the government could be so insensitive yet again.

If there was an APLA base, and if known terrorists were there, and if Transkei refused to hand them over, maybe there could be some excuse for a cross-border raid even if this was totally illegal. But the people should have been arrested and brought back to stand trial in South Africa. Furthermore, there is no justification for South Africa doing what it so wholeheartedly condemned others doing to defenceless people – whether praying or sleeping.

We offer our prayers and sympathies to the bereaved and ask all to stop this reign of terror and to start living in the splendour of truth – something sadly missing in all our structures.

Human life no longer has any value. There is no excuse for point blank murder no matter that 'authorisation for the raid had been based on well-evaluated, "hard" information' (President de Klerk). We need to hear the truth for a change. Our security structures need re-training – but from all appearances this seems virtually impossible.