

SACBC STATEMENT ON BISHOP TUTU (1/5/81)

The administrative board of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference deplores in the strongest possible measure the withdrawal of Bishop Tutu's passport.

All South Africans must recognise, whether they like it or not, that our country's special problem, because of its very nature, engages the attention of people far beyond our borders. For some reason or another they are concerned about how this problem will be solved. We are concerned too because we are deeply involved in the problem and, like Bishop Tutu, see it basically as an issue of Christian behaviour.

Sharing our Christian concern Bishop Tutu is dedicated to a solution that will avoid bloodshed, but he is convinced that only vigorous economic measures will break down white opposition to a desirable political evolution. He may be right or he may be wrong. But the withdrawal of his passport is no way to further the debate on how this evolution should be promoted, an evolution that every reasonable person must admit is necessary if the great majority of the people are to participate realistically in the South African commonweal.

The withdrawal of Bishop Tutu's passport is neither just nor democratic. It offends against the right of free movement. It offends against the right of political dissent. It is a confession of weakness implying that, because Bishop Tutu cannot be answered, his influence must be restricted. We join our voice to the call for the return of his passport.