

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

DELMAS VERDICTS (22/11/88)

“If you want Peace, work for Justice” was the slogan composed by the Holy Father for World Day of Peace some years ago. It sums up the dilemma facing every concerned person in South Africa. Three United Democratic Front members and a South African Council of Churches worker have been convicted of treason. These are men committed to their country and their people and dedicated to the establishment of true peace by the removal of the injustices and inequalities inherent in the apartheid system, including in a special way its most recent expression – the tricameral parliament with its deliberate exclusion of the black community.

We cannot understand how the verdict was reached without specific acts of treasonous nature being named. Normally in a democracy a government which fails to serve the interests of its citizens is removed through the ballot box. By their exclusion from the parliamentary process, blacks are denied this course of action. Moral integrity and logic demand that the government indicate by what legitimate and effective means they are to exercise their democratic right to put into position a government that serves their interests as well as those of their compatriots. We accept that legislation, especially that governing the state of emergency has placed severe strictures on the courts in regard to their role of protecting civil liberties and basic human rights. It is for this reason that we underline the fact that peace will not come about in our land until justice is done and seen to be done by the return to the rule of law and the removal of apartheid.

We cannot accept that opposition to the co-option, repression (carrot-stick) policy of the government can be treason. Furthermore we deplore the fact that such an equation makes a travesty of the serious crime of treason. We, therefore, commit ourselves to continue working for the ideal of peace through justice and wholeheartedly support all who try to make our land more humane by defending human dignity and rights against oppression and injustice.