

SACBC STATEMENT ON SIGNS OF THE TIMES

(15/8/88)

Several recent events bear comment. We have witnessed a state of bombings in shopping areas and public places. We have seen a large group of young men take a public stand on military service. We have heard the Minister of Information threaten Church leaders for speaking out on matters which they believe have a direct bearing on the proclamation of the gospel. In a very real way these are related. We have also been made aware of the initial steps that have been taken to secure peace in Namibia and Angola.

Recent bombings

As leaders of the Church in South Africa, we object in the strongest possible terms to the recent spate of bombings in shopping areas and public places. Innocent people are killed, maimed or injured. Families and individuals are struck by untold and unjustified suffering. They cannot be held responsible for the system we labour under in our country. Whoever is responsible, there can be no justification for these indiscriminate bombings.

At the same time we must point out again that apartheid with its built-in structural violence is the root cause of the violent reactions we deplore. Only when apartheid is ended we can hope for a situation of peace in which people can live as befits their dignity as equal citizens.

Conscientious objection

The recent courageous stand of 143 conscripts in refusing to serve in the South African Defence Force is a clear sign of a growing awareness of the inherent injustices present in a society in which racial discrimination and the denial of human rights are so prevalent. We support them in their stand and join these young men in their call for constructive alternative service for all who in conscience cannot serve in the Defence Force.

Peace initiative

Many people have suffered over the past twenty years as a result of conflict in Namibia and Angola. The prospect of peace in this region is therefore very welcome.

It is not our intention to make any comment on political niceties of this initiative entered into by various parties, but we do want to support any effort that will bring about genuine peace.

In particular we welcome a situation in which the terms of United Nations' Resolution 435 will be implemented and its conditions respected. For years the majority of the people in Namibia have wanted genuine independence and the freedom of running their own country. We pray that this will come about as soon as possible.

Attacks on Church leaders

The Minister of information recently attempted to intimidate Church leaders into silence on matters, which they, in the light of their understanding of the Gospel, believe that they have not only a right but a duty to comment on. We have in past witnessed similar attempts by other government representatives. Rather than attack

Church leaders, such representatives would do well to heed what is being said and seriously question whether what they are about is for the good of all the people whom they support to serve and in accordance with biblical justice.