

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

SUPPORT FOR ARCHBISHOP DENIS HURLEY (17/10/84)

In support of their president, members of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a statement, which said:

We salute our president, Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, in the predicament in which he finds himself. We support him fully and reaffirm our solidarity with the archbishop.

We call upon all Catholic people and all people of goodwill to join us in our commitment to justice in South Africa and ask their prayers. We express our unity with him in identifying ourselves with all the suffering people of Southern Africa."

Twenty months after the event, Archbishop Denis Hurley was charged under section 27B of Act No. 7 of 12, 1958 Police Act, as amended and read with section 1 of the Act:

"In that upon or about the 3rd day of February, 1983, in Pretoria, the accused did unlawfully publish at a press conference untrue matters in relation to action by the force and/or part of the force and/or members of the force"... (and) "that the security forces in South West Africa/Namibia were still perpetrating atrocities against local blacks. Two such cases had been brought to his (Archbishop Hurley's) attention. One case involved a family of five shot in Northern Ovambo, apparently by members of the elite police counter insurgency unit, code name 'Koevoet'.

"He (the Archbishop) also added amongst other allegations that as was usually the case in such incidents, nothing could be proved as there were no eye witnesses. But everybody knew the conclusion that they died in the hands of a certain unit, the unit that is looked upon as the most ruthless, 'Koevoet'. Whilst making this statement the accused had no reasonable grounds for believing that the statement was true."