

SACBC STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE (11/8/93)

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference is deeply concerned about the violence and poverty which are engulfing the country and which threaten the political progress being made at the multi-party negotiations.

Ordinary physical security is our greatest concern. Domestic and criminal violence is rampant. Townships are torn apart by different parties vying for control. People are gripped by fear and despair, as they see no end to the daily struggle just to remain alive. Everywhere citizens live the threat of being attacked at any moment by mysterious terrorists forces.

We join in the call for a nationwide comprehensive campaign for peace, a campaign that should include:

1. A concerted drive to restore regard for the sacredness of human life and respect for the remains of those killed in violence;
2. The establishment of a credible and competent peace-keeping force, preferably under international supervision;
3. The creation as a matter of urgency of a security force of national unity;
4. The speeding up of negotiations for a democratic future;
5. The renunciation by political leaders of selfish concern for political power based on sectional interest;
6. The involvement of people in general and youth in particular in education for democracy and in the practise of democratic values.

The urgent and crying need to achieve peace and a political settlement is highlighted by the demands of the economy. Economic devastation threatens people's lives. Seventeen million people live in dire poverty and they are getting poorer as each month passes. Millions of people being forced to live in overcrowded townships and informal settlements are a recipe for violence and social alienation. Apartheid has hidden their misery from the eyes of many who still fail to understand the enormity of the problem, which cannot be tackled seriously and comprehensively until we have peace and a political settlement.

We call on all Catholics to undertake a campaign of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to plead for God's blessing on our nation during the difficult months leading to the elections. In regard to such religious practices we appreciate all that is being done and will be done by our sisters and brothers of other churches and of other faiths.

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