

SACBC STATEMENT REGARDING THE MORATORIUM ON EXECUTIONS TO BE LIFTED IN SOUTH AFRICA (4/3/91)

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference has noted with deep dismay the announcement by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Kobie Coetzee, that the moratorium on executions is to be lifted and that Mr Paul Bezuidenhout is to be executed on Tuesday 5 March 1991.

As there are more or less 343 persons on death row are we going to see the beginning of daily executions? We have directed an urgent appeal to the State President for a stay of executions until such time as the matter can be examined within the framework of a new constitutional dispensation. There is a growing awareness that capital punishment is unjust. In a recent report of amnesty International, when the State Kills (1989), it states that to date around 80 countries, representing 40% of the world's people, have done away with the death penalty either in law or in practise. However, around 100 countries still retain it. South Africa is one of these, having the highest rates of executions, alongside Iran and China.

Surely society ought to be governed by compassion, justice and mercy for all, thereby reinforcing all that Jesus Christ lived and died for.