

# DRAMATIC CALL BY CHURCH LEADERS

We publish in full the statement issued by Church leaders of eight denominations who recently met in Johannesburg

We meet at a time of national crisis with the civil war escalating. As church leaders charged with the pastoral care of all our members we believe we have a special role and responsibility in bringing reconciliation and healing to our people.

We believe also that the nation as a whole needs to hear that the way in which our society is structured is not God's way.

We are concerned that the divisions in our society are being exacerbated by a number of actions, attitudes and policies which are alien to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Firstly, we are concerned at the failure of the nation's leaders, including church leaders, to educate our people - particularly young people - about the need for sound and peaceful race relations. We are distressed to find negative attitudes among our people - attitudes which are based on propaganda which glorifies the perpetuation of evil systems.

Secondly, we recognise that we meet at one of the most critical and possibly the last Parliamentary sessions of our land before its sessions. Recommendations from the President's Council, which seek to divide our people still further, are to be put before this session.

Yet the President's Council is simply a sophisticated way of propping up the pillars of apartheid, the sum total of which is to consolidate power in the hands of a small

white power elite, by recruiting Coloureds and Indians, while ignoring the reality of even "the urban blacks living in South Africa."

This brand of "power sharing" is prompted by ideologies not in harmony with the teachings of Christ, such as selfishness and superiority. This retards the realisation of the kingdom of God and brings us nearer to the inevitable doom of destruction and chaos.

Thirdly, we are already in a state of low intensity civil war on our borders, which spills over into incredible actions by both sides, and we deplore this violence. Violence begets violence, and all should note the huge human cost in escalating violence.

With this in mind we call for an immediate cessation of armed conflict on both sides, and for a just solution to the present impasse to be sought by calling a national convention. The President's Council is not such a convention and is unrepresentative.

Fourthly, it should be understood that part of the cost of violence is the degree of mistrust which now exists at various levels among all South Africans. We are concerned that the result is a nation of people who, fuelled by this mistrust, begin to fear for their own personal security, the security of their country, the continued existence of the Church.

It must be recognised that the longer we shun the conference table, the more blood will be spilt.

Finally, we call on all Christians in South Africa to commit themselves to help lead the country to a state in which the future of our children will no longer be the subject of military might. To this end, while recognising the need for a national convention, we commit ourselves to start working towards a national convention for all Christians.

As church leaders we also commit ourselves to a joint spiritual pilgrimage in which we seek the Holy Spirit's will for us, through prayer, fasting and a "wilderness experience" as Jesus did himself, as we try to exercise our responsibility of leadership.

We also see a dire need for closer co-operation of church leaders and for co-ordinated action for ethical decision and Christian action.

Signed by:  
African Catholic Church - Rev. L.M. Marokane. Reformed Presbyterian Church of S.A. - Rev. B.D. Yanta, Rev. D.M. Soga. Church of Province of S.A. - Rt. Rev. K. Oram, Rev. W. Ndungane. United Congregational Church of S.A. - Rev. Margaret Constable, Rev. J. Wing. Evangelical Lutheran Church of S.A. - Rt. Rev. D. Rapoo. S.A.C.C. - Rt. Rev. D. Tutu, Rev. P.J. Stoney. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of S.A. - Rt. Rev. J.F. Bill, Rev. J.S. Ngobe. Methodist Church of S.A. - Rev. Dr. Khosa Mgojo, Rev. M.S. Mogohe. Moravian Church of Southern Africa - Rev. B. Mzimba.