

Sechabe  
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## JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE AND THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

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*This communique was issued jointly by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and the African National Congress, on 16th April, after a meeting in Lusaka.*

Delegations of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) and the African National Congress met in Lusaka on the 15th and 16th of April, 1986. The delegations were led by Archbishop Denis Hurley and Oliver Tambo, presidents of the SACBC and the ANC respectively.

The two bodies met as a result of their common commitment to bring a speedy end to the evil system of apartheid and to transform South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial country.

The delegations agreed that the meeting was especially necessary because of the persistent and escalating violence of the apartheid regime against the majority of the people of our country, those of Namibia and Southern Africa as a whole. The Catholic delegation expressed its concern about the growing counter-violence of the exasperated victims of the system. The delegations agreed that the apartheid system was the cause of this situation and that peace in our region can only be achieved through the complete abolition of the system of White minority rule.

They recognised that apartheid cannot be reformed, but must be ended in its entirety. Accordingly, they agreed that the Pretoria regime cannot be an agent for change; rather, it is the principal obstacle to the emergence of a democratic government representative of all the people of South Africa.

The meeting agreed that democracy in South Africa cannot be achieved without effective action. The ANC delegation explained its position with regard to the armed struggle. The Catholic delegation pointed out that, though it understood the reasons why the ANC resorted to force, it felt it could not identify with this aspect of ANC strategy. The delegations discussed ways in which each organisation could contribute even more effectively to bring an end to the apartheid system.

The SACBC recognised the fact that the ANC is playing an important role in this struggle and that it will occupy a similar position in a free South Africa. It therefore considers it vital that there should be continuing contact between the ANC and the

SACBC. The SACBC also recognised that it is necessary for the Catholic Church to engage in specific actions to increase the pressure for genuine change in South Africa. Mere condemnation of the apartheid system is not enough.

The ANC welcomed the fact that the Catholic Church stands opposed to the apartheid system. It sees the Catholic Church and the religious community in general as an important force in the struggle against apartheid, for justice and peace. It respects the right of the Church to determine its own strategy for change, but is convinced that a firm basis exists for common action by all those who are genuinely opposed to apartheid, both to liquidate this system and together to shape the future South Africa.

The two delegations agreed that it was important further to intensify the campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees. They also agreed that the people of South Africa have a responsibility to express their opposition to Pretoria's campaign of aggression and destabilisation against the independent states of Southern Africa.

The meeting also agreed that the Catholic Church has a responsibility to mobilise its White adherents not only to reject apartheid but also to act against it. In this regard, it is vital that the White population should recognise the fact that the Black majority, from experience, knows the South African Defence Force and the South African Police as instruments of oppression and repression. The meeting accordingly recognised the importance of the campaign to end military conscription.

The delegations agreed that the international community has a responsibility to increase its own pressure for a speedy end to the apartheid system.

The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. It was inspired by the realisation that the attainment of democracy, justice and peace in South Africa is a matter of great urgency. It proceeded from the common understanding that there can be no neutrality in the struggle against racism and apartheid.

Moved by a common concern to see all the people of South Africa, both Black and White, living together in peace and as equals, the SACBC and the ANC agreed that they would continue to maintain contact with each other.