



KWAZULU-NATAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

50 Langalibalele Street - P.O. Box 2035 Pietermaritzburg 3200 South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 33 3454819 Fax: +27 (0) 33 3949965 Email: info@kzncc.org.za

Dr Douglas Dziva, KZNCC CEO
ddziva@kzncc.org.za

02 March 2020

Media Statement- For Immediate Release

KZN CHURCH LEADERS GROUP URGES CITIZENS TO OPT FOR PEACE IN THE MIDST OF ALL CHAOTIC VIOLENCE

PIETERMARITZBURG - Yesterday at 07h00, the KwaZulu Natal Church Leaders Group (KZN-CLG) convened by the KwaZulu Natal Christian Council (KZNCC) held an urgent virtual meeting via Zoom to evaluate the current situation of violence and unrest in various parts of the province and the nation at large.

Led by Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, Chairperson of the KZN-CLG, the leaders note with serious concern the reckless behavior of numerous people who have resorted to violence, looting and damage of property. Such actions have a direct impact on businesses, livelihoods and access to food.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the acts of burning of businesses as well as burning of informal settlements.

We have noted a typical racial tension where Black Africans have been attacked. We therefore condemn in the strongest possible terms, the attacks against any race. We condemn in strongest terms threats to attack foreign national or xenophobic attacks

We condemn in the strongest possible the threats to launch inter-racial violence
We call for stability, peace and unity in our province and nation at large.

"We condemn, in the strongest possible terms the violence that has wreaked havoc across our province: destroying property, infrastructure and businesses, intimidating innocent people and causing widespread fear and anxiety. We state that this is totally unacceptable and cannot, under any circumstances be tolerated", said Cardinal Napier.

Subsequently, the following resolutions were taken:

- a. That the KZNCLG appreciates that people have different viewpoints and opinions on the socio-political issues of the day, and therefore urgently calls for dialogue and practical interventions from all parties and stakeholders rather than violence.
- b. That Churches are concerned and anxious about the level of the historical inequality we continue to experience today.

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier and Bishop Myaka went on to emphasise the call to Government to urgently reduce the glaring and immoral chasm between the rich and the people on the margins.

“We urge our political, social and community leaders to call and stand for peace and calmness, so that the issues of the day can be addressed with the participation of leaders from all sectors of society”, said Cardinal Napier.

The group highlighted the key role that the Church has in offering pastoral care, peace monitoring and peace building at this time and urged faith leaders to be visible in offering support wherever it is needed.

They also called on government to find solutions which will meet the needs of the poor and needy, and which will protect communities and businesses from thuggery.

“Government, the Faith and Business sectors and Civil Society together have an urgent role to play in responding to those who are destitute and hungry; a situation which has only been amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past 18 months. Poverty and dire hunger cannot be ignored and must be addressed immediately. Leaving these lived realities unaddressed is not only immoral but will also prepare fertile ground for unrest” declared Bishop Myaka.

Speaking to those calling for and resorting to violence the group of leaders urged them to reconsider their strategy with their resolutions stating, “Let us be clear; it is the poorest and most marginalized in our society – those who have already been hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and its related lockdown restrictions - who will again bear the brunt and feel the real pain of this violent unrest.”

The KwaZulu Natal Church Leaders Group are actively engaging around this issue to ensure peace and calm to be restored. They will be meeting with the KZN Premier this week to engage political leadership so that urgent interventions are taken. They are also engaging with national political and ecumenical leadership to find workable, long-lasting solutions to this crisis. This includes negotiating with government to give Clergy permission to travel for pastoral care during lockdown hours.

Finally, the KZN-CLG made the following urgent calls:

1. To all people of faith there is a call to prayer: prayer for peace and stability, for wisdom and courage, for vision and leadership
2. To business and the public: we are now hit with a food crisis. Please make any donation you can to the KZNCC for the distribution of food to those left most vulnerable by these riots (bank details below).
3. To Church Leaders: please get in contact if you are willing to become peace monitors and be deployed at this critical moment.

“We will continue to journey and support our government through continuous prayers and escalate whatever information that we see beneficial to our people because the churches are speechless at this level of revolting violence. We grieve with all those who grieve and extend our heartfelt condolences to all those who have lost loved ones at this time. Furthermore, we shall do everything possible to protect children, the elderly, the sick and the vulnerable by actions which build faith, hope and love in the world around us” said Bishop Nkosinathi Myaka, KZNCC Chairperson.

Emotions of my soul –

It is this: CRY – the beloved country.

*Cry – for broken lives and unmet dreams;
Cry – for silent voices and uncontrolled rage;
Cry – for hearts of greed and empty hands;
Cry – for fists of violence and fear-filled souls;
Cry – for hope filled courage and courage that has lost hope;
And through the fog and my paralysed being –
Through the words of Paton's title –
There is BUT just one verse that makes its way through:
"JESUS WEPT".*

(Von Elke Kaiser Carrihill)

Ends

For Media enquiries contact:

KZNCC Communications

Xola Nkabinde

+27 (0) 72 834 4219 (m)

Bank Details for Food Relief:

Name: KZNCC

Bank: FNB

Account no: 62601869243

Branch: 221-325

Reference: Food