



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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March 1, 2017

Most Reverend Edouardo Hiiboro Kussala
Bishop of Tamburo-Yambio
President, Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC)
South Sudan Bishops' Secretariat
B.P. 258 Juba, South Sudan

Your Excellency:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, I write to express our solidarity and concern in light of the continued violence in South Sudan and in response to your Pastoral Message of February 19, 2017.

We share your painful sense of tragedy that the civil war continues despite your multiple calls to stop the fighting. It is troubling that the violence is not just between armed groups, but is now increasingly targeting innocent, unarmed civilians. In addition, we note that people are attacked based on their ethnicity as a form of collective punishment. We agree that these trends must be studied and the perpetrators held to account for their crimes.

In addition, we learned that this horrific violence and drought conditions have led to famine that will kill even more innocent souls. There are reports that the economy is in a desperate shape with inflation rising out of control. It is particularly disturbing that Church institutions are being attacked and churches destroyed and that the Church is hampered in its efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in most need.

We pray that your pastoral letter, the recent public message of Pope Francis, and the Holy Father's possible visit to South Sudan with the Archbishop of Canterbury may bring some consolation and hope to the people of South Sudan. The Church, in collaboration with South Sudan Council of Churches, also brings hope and assistance through the Action Plan for Peace. Your constant work for the common good in the face of such hardship and violence shows great courage and resilience. We stand ready to assist you in any way we can. We welcome your recommendations regarding how the United States Government can play a constructive role in the crisis.

May you find solace in the Lord's words in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:11-12). May God grant you continued courage, wisdom and humility as you struggle to keep the spirit of dialogue and peace alive in South Sudan. You and the people of South Sudan remain in my prayers.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantu
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace