CBCM ဖြည်ထောင်စုသမ္မတမြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်ကက်သလစ်ဆရာတော်ကြီးများအဖွဲ့ချုပ်
၂၉၂ (က) ပြည်လမ်း၊ စမ်းချောင်း၊ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ၁၁၁၁၁။

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Ref 071R/2020

Statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar

Earnest Appeal to Cease All Hostilities, Unite in Fight Against COVID, Invest in Peace

29th June, 2020

Dear People of Myanmar, State and Non-State actors,

We, the Catholic Bishops of Myanmar, representing sixteen dioceses of Myanmar, wish you good health and robust peace. Amidst the COVID pandemic, challenges abound but opportunities for reconciliation and rebuilding the nation beckon us. This is the election year. This is the year of hope.

We commend the selfless dedication of our health professional in fighting the COVID pandemic. Despite the deadly challenge of the virus, timely interventions by the authorities and the medical professional have contained the pandemic so far. Eternal vigilance and expanding testing facilities are vital needs for our people. Returning migrant brothers and sisters need our care and compassion.

COVID has been proving to be a great challenge even for super powers. Countries have invested all their energies in waging a mighty war against this lethal virus. Pope Francis urged the world, "As we are all together in this, only by unity we can win this challenge." War torn countries are most vulnerable. The UN Secretary General *António Guterres* and *Pope Francis* have called for cessation of all hostilities during this global pandemic. Peace is the antidote.

We are saddened by the continued conflict in our land. Conflict regression has occurred in the Kachin, Shan, Kayin and Rakhine areas. UN OCHA has indicated there are nearly 250,000 IDPs in our country. People living in IDPs camps are most vulnerable and their rights should be respected. In this regard any kind of land grabbing should

not be extended in IDPs' land and ensure and restore their property rights in their places of origin.

The conflict in Rakhine is the heart wrenching sorrow. The present conflict has thrown out nearly thousands of innocent people and displaced families are at the risk of starvation. Rainy season and COVID add to risks. Humanitarian access has proved to be a great challenge in Rakhine areas. Myanmar Government and the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) are earnestly requested to take into serious consideration of their responsibilities for the Rights of all the citizens of Myanmar by observing International Humanitarian Law to ensure access to all IDPs.

Myanmar is a golden land. This land is blessed with great natural and human resources. Peace has a forceful dividend for all. We can once again become one of the richest countries in South East Asia, if we can invest in peace.

Myanmar has seen six decades of war - with no winners. Death and displacement of the innocent people continues. War shows no de-escalation. Thousands of our innocent people suffer. Generations of youth are lost to frustration. War has become an incurable disease of the nation. This has to stop.

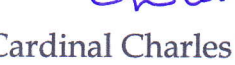
Seventy-two years after Independence, this land has known no peace. The ethnic armed groups may have ascendancy occasionally but they are not winning any wars and therefore we urge the ethnic armed groups to return to negotiating tables. And also we urge the Government and Tamadaw, rather than trying to prevail militarily, but to find political strategy to address the grievances and give the communities renewed hope that electoral democracy can help them achieve their aspiration through peaceful means. The coming elections are a great opportunity to invest in democracy.

The new threat of COVID demands that we stand together in peace. The coming elections offer a great hope that a representative political participation is possible and it is the only way ahead.

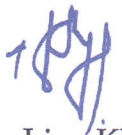
We call upon all state and non-state actors to invest in peace. Peace is possible, peace is the only way. Just, equitable and inclusive solutions are possible through cessation of hostilities and willingness to dialogue in good faith.

With prayerful wishes and hope,

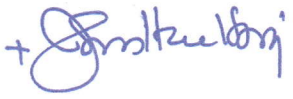
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM)



Cardinal Charles Bo
Archbishop of Yangon



Bishop Felix Lian Khen Thang
President of CBCM

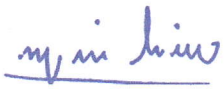


Bishop John Hsane Hgyi
Vice President of CBCM

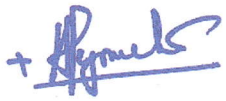
Bishop John Saw Yaw Han
General Secretary of CBCM

Bishop Stephen Tjephe
Substitute Member of CBCM

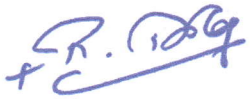
Archbishop Basilio Athai
Archbishop of Taunggyi



Archbishop Marco Tin Win
Archbishop of Mandalay

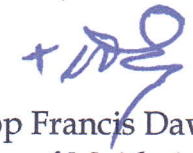


Bishop Alexander Pyone Cho
Bishop of Pyay



Bishop Raymond Saw Phoe Ray
Bishop of Mawlamyine

Bishop Justin Saw Min Thide
Bishop of Hpa-An

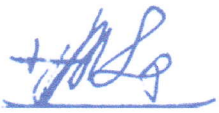


Bishop Francis Daw Tang
Bishop of Myitkyina

Bishop Raymond Sumlut Gam
Bishop of Bamaw

Bishop Lucius Hre Kung
Bishop of Hakha

Bishop Lucas Dau Ze
Bishop of Lashio



Bishop Peter Hla
Bishop of Pekhone

Bishop Isaac Danu
Bishop of Taungngu

Rev. Fr. Peter Anwe
Administrator of Kengtung