

BURUNDI CHURCH LEADERS PEACE NETWORK

A Peace Initiative

Introduction

In view of the critical and deteriorating situation in the country of Burundi, we, as a group of church leaders have met to find one another and seek a way forward into peace and reconciliation for our precious country. Let us first elaborate on who we are, and then present for you our vision for a peaceful Burundi as well as some practical steps whereby this may be achieved.

I. WHO WE ARE

1. We are a group of senior church leaders from different denominations, backgrounds, and ethnic groups who have met in fellowship at the Dimesse Sisters Conference Center in Nairobi, Kenya, from 4th to 6th February, 1996. Some members of our group are living inside the country, and some outside. Our testimony is that through sharing our frustrations, fears, and even deep mistrust at times, we have reached brotherly understanding. This has given us great hope.
2. We have also reached agreement to speak the truth prophetically without fear or favor to all sides in our country. We are further resolved to support one another in any way possible and to walk in unity, love, and light.
3. We have one basic purpose, which is to bring peace, reconciliation, justice, inner healing, and an end to all conflict in our land.

II . OUR VISION FOR A PEACEFUL BURUNDI

1. Our vision and dream for Burundi is that it should be a country living in peace, justice, unity, and with security for all. We dream of a land where everyone agrees to live by the Rule of Law as it is only by such an agreement that law and order may prevail. We also see a democratic, stable, and prosperous Burundi offering equal rights, equal education, and equal job opportunities for all.

2. For this to be achieved, it will be necessary to find and develop a constitution which has been worked out with the appropriate checks and balances. It is vital that it should have been agreed to by all groups, that it protect both majorities and minorities fairly and that it result in an ethnically inclusive National Assembly. Beyond that, all our people need to understand that with all of this there also come deep obligations and a sense of individual responsibility among all citizens.

3. In terms of the maintenance of law and order, we believe that an essential prerequisite is an ethnically inclusive army, police, and security forces, all of whom should receive adequate and professional training so as to fulfill their vital responsibility with effectiveness and impartiality.

III. STEPS TO ACHIEVING OUR VISION

It is clearly necessary to establish some steps by which this vision may be brought to reality.

1. We commit ourselves to communicating the vision by all means possible (e.g. personal visits, radio, press, television, etc.)

i. to fellow church leaders, both protestant and catholic, who have not as yet been part of our process of fellowship and exploration.

ii. to church congregations throughout Burundi.

- iii. to political leaders and members of Parliament, both ruling and in opposition.
- iv. to the business and Professional community and the civil society, recognizing that such people can make a great contribution in facilitation and cooperation.
- v. to the military and militia.
- vi. to university and college students.
- vii. to women groups and youth groups.
- viii. to the nation as a whole.
- ix. to church leadership in the Great Lakes Region around us.
- x. to regional political leadership in our neighboring countries.
- xi. to the OAU, UN, and European Union, who need to be apprized of this initiative. (This is not to be construed as a call for intervention, but to make such bodies aware of this local Christian initiative.)
- xii. to international partners (e.g. the ecumenical family, The Carter Initiative, etc.).

2. We need to identify and with a concerted effort network with all presently existing peace initiatives, both inside and outside the country.

e.g. Burundi International Peace Committee
 Episcopal Church Peace Committee
 Campus pour Christ Initiative ("Christ's Love Will Rebuild Burundi")
 AACC and WCC Endeavors
 National Council of Churches Peace Committee
 Kundane (International Bible Society)
 Catholic Peace Initiative
 Peace Center (Evangelical Friends)
 MAP International Reconciliation Ministries
 Nairobi Peace Initiative
 (this list is by no means exhaustive)

3. We agreed to maintain mechanisms to stay in fellowship.

4. We shall give all assistance to the task force which we have established for follow-up. The members of the task force are: Mgr. NDUWAYO, Mgr. NDORICIMPA, Mgr. NTUKAMAZINA, Mgr. NZEYIMANA, Rev. NTAHOTURI, Rev. BUCONYORI, and Mr. NDABISHURIYE. Bishops NDORICIMPA and NTUKAMAZINA were chosen as copresidents, and the Reverends NTAHOTURI and BUCONYORI were name secretaries.

5. We are resolving to establish an extensive inter-church prayer chain to cover this process with serious intercession.

6. We intend to engage in informal, back-stage diplomacy.

7. We will plan and mount a series of reconciliation seminars and peace forums for church leaders. (We should not hesitate to call in outside help should it seem necessary or desirable.)

8. We should consider the possibility of either a mission to the leadership circles of our country or an evangelistic reconciliation city-wide mission to Bujumbura, or both.

9. We should consider inviting some outside teamlets of concerned Christians to Join us in bringing a ministry of encouragement to our people, our political leaders, and the church as a whole. (In other places such ministries of encouragement have been called "From Africa with Love". We would make this an urgent call to our Christian brothers and sisters around Africa.)

10. We plan to organize and mount an inter-church Jesus Peace Rally to pray for peace and reconciliation in our country. (See Joel 2:16-18)

11. We would like to consider a series of informal and private dialogue weekends for political leaders.

12. We might explore the possibilities of third party mediation if we are not able to make progress quickly any other way or achieve a break-through in the immediate future.

IV. SPECIFIC ACTION PLAN

In order to achieve the above, a specific and detailed action plan is obviously necessary and work on this is underway as a matter of urgency and priority.

May God save and bless Burundi!

Nairobi, February 6, 1996

SIGNED BY:

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