

Press Release on the War in Cote d'Ivoire

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All Africa Conference of Churches

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The War in Cote d'Ivoire Threatens Peace in West Africa and Central Africa

By Polycarp Omolo Ochilo

AACC Executive Secretary for International Affairs

Nairobi, November 14 - The on-going war in Cote d'Ivoire seriously threatens the prevailing fragile peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) General Secretary Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala has said. Africa, he said, has held her breath for some time now, that these countries will not erupt into war again! But , he said, we were wrong again! War has erupted again in Cote d'Ivoire .

Recalling his recent Pastoral visit to Sierra Leone and Liberia last month, he said he saw hope, healing, and firm commitment for the attainment of a lasting peace from the citizens of these countries. This he said, is the momentum that other African countries and the International Community should seize and hold on to very firmly. These countries, others in Africa and the rest of the world , he said, need peace rather than war, period!!

Over 27 people have so far been killed in Cote d Ivoire since the war erupted. The number includes 10 French nationals killed in the air strike by the Cote d'Ivoire's Air Force. It is also estimated that over 1000 people have so far been wounded, and 37 Cote d'Ivoire loyalists, according to the presidential spokesman Alain Toussaint, have been killed.

Dr. Dandala, on behalf of the 170 member churches of the AACC expressed his gratitude to the quick response by the Chairperson of the African Union who is also the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency General Olesegun Obasanjo in mediating for peace in Cote d'Ivoire. He also paid similar

tribute to the South African President Thabo Mbeki for similar efforts. The AACC membership he said, supports fully these initiatives as the only way for the achievement of a lasting peace. He further called for the continued combined efforts towards peace by citizens from these countries, other countries from the rest of Africa, the church in Africa and the international community as well.

He called on the people of Cote d'Ivoire to give peace a chance and urged them to offer God's love and friendship to each other as citizens of one country and children of God. In war, he said we kill each other, destroy civilizations, undermine our dignity, spirituality, and we plant seeds of hate, distrust and hopelessness among our people. We must, as Africans, refuse the road to war, rather we must opt for positive hope, lasting peace and God's love for all.

Dr. Dandala added that, it is time for African people to refuse war and reject leaders who promote war. We must opt for democratic and peaceful ways to power. This he said is one of the surest ways of ensuring that our governments become accountable to our people and respect for the sanctity of human life as God so desired. Africa must lay firm foundations of peace now that we shall bequeath our children of tomorrow and not the culture of corruption, greed and senseless wars. The church in Africa is called upon to use her prophetic voice in ensuring that peace prevails in Africa.

Dr. Dandala regretted that religious conflicts between the Christians and Muslims led to the deaths of people and destruction of churches and mosques. He said, the firm faith-based foundations that have worked so well for Christians and Muslims in Liberia must not be destroyed. These instruments have served the people of Liberia so well that we cannot accept voices of destruction and wars to overshadow them. Christians and Muslims must accept to live together in this shared world. This is God's will.

Dr. Dandala was reacting to the events in Africa while in the United States of America. His visit in the U.S.A. to meet with AACC Partners in the U.S.A., Heads of Churches and Civil Society groups was arranged by the Church World Service (New York office). He proceeds to London for similar engagements next week before returning to the AACC headquarters in Nairobi.

The All Africa Conference of Churches is a fellowship of 169 member

Churches and Christian Councils in 39 African Countries.

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