



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

SACBC STATEMENT ON GAZA – AUGUST 2014

August 2014 marks 100 years since the beginning of the Great War: a century of war & violence. And over and over again, we witness the tragic consequences of lessons never learnt. The cry “*no more war!*” has gone unheeded and millions continue to suffer and die.

In different parts of Africa, in Iraq and Syria and now in Gaza we are faced with stark and horrifying evidence of the moral bankruptcy of modern warfare.

By its very nature: in situations and with weapons where no distinction is possible between combatants and non-combatants and where superpowers are stymied by lone suicide bombers, modern warfare shows itself to be obsolete. War that has become interminable – or self-perpetuating as in Gaza – solves nothing; it never reconciles but only succeeds in entrenching hatred and division.

Whether perpetrated by Israeli or by Palestinian, the use of violence will never bring a solution to the problems of the Holy Land. First and foremost the Israeli offensive against Gaza and the firing of Palestinian rockets must stop. Then, it must be recognized that so long as structural forms of violence continue – for example, the illegal settlements, the wall, the checkpoints and restriction of movement, the lack of security on both sides – there is little hope for any lasting peace. These and other root problems must be engaged and resolved.

It was said some 70 years ago, surely in the aftermath of August 1945 and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, “*that humankind is fast reaching a point where it must choose between a God of Love and biological suicide.*” It is no exaggeration to say that that point is upon us, that point has been reached.

We call on the leaders of Palestine and Israel to put an end to the war and to cease the violence – to stop killing each other.

We call upon them, in the name of the God of Love they both worship – and with the collaboration of the International Community – to commit themselves:

- to respect their common and fundamental dignity and rights;
- to dialogue, to real negotiations and the building of a lasting peace.