

27 April 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

It is with deep urgency and concern that we, representatives of the Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches in Canada, write to you regarding the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. We are reaching out to you not only as Church leaders but as citizens of Canada, a country blessed with peace and prosperity.

First, we wish to commend the Government of Canada for aid and attention, both recent and in the past, which it has provided to South Sudan, as well as to Yemen, Somalia and Nigeria – four countries facing a desperate food scarcity crisis. Some 20 million people are presently at risk of famine. We welcomed the announcement of 17 March 2017 by the Minister of Immigration committing \$119 million to these four countries, of which \$37 million is allocated specifically to South Sudan. Canada's continued contribution of 10 peacekeepers to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS, or "Operation SOPRANO") is likewise a tangible witness to your government's concern and commitment to this region. Yet much more needs to be done.

Our three Churches have strong connections to Churches in South Sudan, both through our respective Communion and Church structures as well as through the humanitarian assistance provided by the relief and development agencies of our respective denominations. The South Sudan Council of Churches is actively engaged in promoting dialogue and reconciliation among the warring parties, a conflict which has spiralled out of control since December 2013. In a letter dated 3 September 2016 to the United Nations Security Council, the South Sudan Council of Churches outlined its call for peace, and described the horrifying realities on the ground. UN Security Council Resolution 2155 in 2014 provided a similar assessment of the human rights abuses.

We are continuing to hear disturbing reports of gross violations of fundamental human rights being carried out with total impunity. On 23 February 2016, the Catholic Bishops of South Sudan released two communiqués describing the crisis and appealing for international assistance. The Bishops noted the following:

- Ongoing killing and torture of civilians
- Rape and sexual violence being used as a tool of war
- Unlawful detention
- The burning and mutilation of human bodies
- The dumping of human bodies into septic tanks filled with sewage
- Collective punishment inflicted on civilian populations
- Destruction of crops
- The blocking of humanitarian assistance to civilians

The Bishops have affirmed that many of the atrocities are being committed by both government and opposition forces. The Bishops also point to the dreadful and man-made famine being inflicted on the country. An article from the *Globe and Mail* on 26 March 2017 reported on this tragedy as well, noting that 100,000 people in South Sudan are currently in famine conditions and one million more on the brink, with 5.5 million South Sudanese being at risk of famine by July 2017. With such unthinkable suffering, it is no wonder that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that South Sudan is now experiencing the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world, with 1.6 million displaced people out of a population of 11 million, and an average of 2,800 people fleeing the country each day.

Mr. Prime Minister, if the violence continues unabated, the ethnic tribes in South Sudan risk becoming further alienated from one another, making the governing of this young country more difficult and complex when eventually there is a cessation to the violence. The deep social scars which will inevitably follow this civil war could put South Sudan into a perpetual state of volatility with the outbreak of further societal ills ever present. We already witness this tragic state of affairs in other regions of the world. The international community cannot allow this to be repeated in South Sudan. Accordingly, we are asking our Government the following:

- To consider increasing its support to the UN mission in South Sudan;
- To speak out more emphatically at home and abroad on the food crisis in the region and the grave conflict in South Sudan, and to be a leading voice at the United Nations for greater international assistance;
- To encourage the international community to provide more humanitarian assistance and to assist in restoring the rule of law and protecting human rights;
- To work diligently with Canadian businesses both at home and abroad, as well as with the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, to prevent weapons and other military-grade material from reaching South Sudan.

At the same time we are convinced that all people of goodwill shall surely be moved to action by the tragic situation in South Sudan, our request as Christians is particularly motivated by the teaching of Jesus Christ:

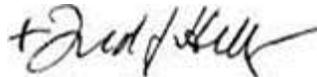
*“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:34-36, 40).*

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas Crosby".

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI  
Bishop of Hamilton and President of the  
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred J. Hiltz".

Fred J. Hiltz  
Archbishop and Primate  
The Anglican Church of Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Douglas H. Rollwage".

The Rev. Douglas H. Rollwage  
Moderator of the 2016 General Assembly of  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada