

# The Kairos Document

- State Theology
- Church Theology
- Prophetic Theology

**“Whatever the people decide to use to eliminate those enemy elements is their decision. If they decide to use necklacing, we support it . . .”**

*Mr Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC Mission in Exile, as reported in an interview with the London Sunday Times. Published in The Daily News, September 16, 1986*

**O**ne side of the debate regarding the violence of oppression and the violence used in resistance to oppression is set out in the Kairos Document, an unsigned “Challenge to the Church” compiled by “concerned Christians”, most of whom are known to be closely involved with the South African Council of Churches.

The document, in essence, justifies the violence of the External Mission of the ANC because in its view the ANC is fighting tyranny and it is opposing a regime which is inherently evil and beyond redemption and the politics of negotiation.

When theorising on violence, the Kairos Document does NOT take into account, for instance, the violence which is NOT directed against the SA regime but against black South Africans. Endemic violence of the most horrible kind which is directed at the political opponents of the ANC Mission in Exile.

It makes no mention that the “necklace” has been claimed as an ANC weapon. ANC President, Mr Oliver Tambo, attempted at the recent Non-Aligned Movement Conference in Harare to play down the involvement of the ANC in this barbaric practice but only recently, in London, the

Secretary-General of the ANC, Mr Alfred Nzo, told the London Sunday Times that “collaborators with the enemy” had to be eliminated.

Asked if this included necklacing, Mr Nzo is reported to have nodded emphatically, according to the London Sunday Times.

The newspaper further quoted Mr Nzo as saying: “Whatever the people decide to use to eliminate those enemy elements is their decision. If they decide to use necklacing, we support it.” (The Daily News, September 16, 1986).

The Kairos Document does not mention the ANC Mission in Exile or the UDF or COSAS but, in the introduction, it says: “In opposition to tyranny and oppression Christians may be required to take solidarity action or join significant political movements working towards the overthrow of tyranny where clear Christian choices may not be possible or available . . .”

The document pleads for a prophetic faith which needs “spirituality of combat”. It goes on to say that there are “strong liberation movements which have received support from the ecumenical community because they are the representatives of the suffering people.

“The time has come for the Churches to declare their

alliance with the forces of liberation against the apartheid regime.” Clearly, the authors of the document are identifying with the ANC Mission in Exile and the UDF.

The document is, in fact, a plea for the ANC Mission in Exile, the UDF and COSATU. The document asks the Church to give party political support to these organisations. It does not discuss the criteria which Christians should use to decide which political organisation is “the representative of the suffering people.”

The document talks about there being three theologies: State Theology which justifies apartheid, Church Theology which addresses the oppressor and not the oppressed and Prophetic Theology, which it postulates is the only true theology.

Apartheid IS reprehensible, but the Kairos Document negates political reality. It invites Christians to take revolutionary action within a framework it establishes. It screams out against the politics of negotiation.

The authors of the document say in effect that the South African regime is so intensely evil that it cannot be expected to reform. As an example it says: “The reforms that come from the top are never satisfactory. They seldom do more than make oppression more effective and more acceptable.”

The Kairos Document distorts the nature of politics and it distorts the nature of society because it ignores the fact that just as the use of violence against apartheid can never bring about justice, the use of violence against apartheid of the kind it supports, will never produce justice.

# STOP PRESS:

## **Archbishop Denis Hurley replies to Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.**

**"When violence is so widespread, it is not for us to make pronouncements about just or unjust war."**

**A**rchbishop Denis Hurley has now partly responded to the various questions put to him by Chief M G Buthelezi.

The main points of his reply follow:

"The Chief Minister asks if the Catholic Church believes that a just war is being fought by the ANC . . . It is extremely difficult to discuss just war while avoiding signification or meaning, but no doubt the Chief Minister's semantic thrust is that he does not want the issue clouded by a fog of theological technicalities.

"I shall spare him these, not even listing the various criteria that theologians have formulated for the just war. Instead, I shall deal with what appear to be the two main issues he raises, namely, whether the ANC is right at arriving at the conclusion that the situation of injustice under apartheid is such that an armed struggle is the only way to remedy it and, second, whether the methods it promotes, recommends or tolerates render its armed struggle unjust.

"My answer is that the Catholic Church in South Africa, represented in dealing with such matters by the Catholic Bishops' Conference, has yet made no pronouncement on these questions.

"It may do so in the future but in doing so would have to weigh very carefully the advisability of attempting a theological and moral judgement concerning just or unjust war in a situation created by the enormous injustice of apartheid.

"To single out the behaviour of the ANC for labelling unjust when the total context in which that behaviour is occurring is a bear-pit of injustices, is an injustice in itself.

"When fisticuffs have broken out between all the members of two rival football teams, it is not just to whistle up one side for foul

play, especially if it is not the side that began the fight.

"The ANC is firmly convinced that the South African Government began the fight by continuing and confirming apartheid after the decades of pleading and persuading from 1912 to World War II and the decade and a half of direct confrontation that ended with Sharpeville.

"Despairing that the whites would never understand and change their ways, Mr Nelson Mandela began the armed struggle in 1961, the same Mr Nelson Mandela whose friendship and approval the Chief Minister is so avid to claim.

"In regard to bombing, necklacing and burning, the Bishops' Conference expressed its horror and detestation as vigorously as it had denounced unacceptable and barbarous behaviour on the part of the security forces.

"People were killed without pity. One cannot but deplore such indiscriminate slaughter . . . The question arises:

Is the strategy of sabotage being escalated into unlimited terrorism, or is this the act of a group of hot-heads taking matters into their own hands? . . .

"We published a similar reaction to the car bomb explosion in Durban on the morning of April 3, 1984.

"We continue to deplore and condemn the horror of bombing.

"At the end of 1984 in our report on police conduct during townships protests we wrote: ' . . . The legacy of bitterness and resentment that all this wanton violence engenders serves only to postpone a just and lasting settlement of the issues dividing our country . . .

" . . . we are well aware that others besides the police are engaged in illegal and violent activities. We also recognise

what the police have done in protecting the innocent from criminals and hooligans . . . we acknowledge that some persons and groups may exploit this situation for their own criminal ends. We concede, too, there may have been times when the police were provoked or needed to protect themselves . . .

"In January, 1986, I referred, in the course of my report to the plenary session of the Bishops' Conference to the "gruesome necklace of fire . . ."

"All this supports what I said in my first response to the Chief Minister: that the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference deplores both the violence of the State and the violence of the ANC — and the violence of any other body guilty of it.

"When violence is so widespread, it is not for us to make pronouncements about just or unjust war.

"In regard to Inkatha's non-violent stand, one cannot but endorse and approve it, but one would like to be less uncertain about Inkatha's role in many a situation of conflict in our province.

"The Chief Minister himself admits that 'no leader can ensure that every member of his or her organisation never resorts to violence.'

"About my attitude (Archbishop Hurley is a patron of the UDF — Editor) to the UDF, I am surprised to learn from the Chief Minister that I identified with the UDF and justified my identification by saying that the UDF was not a political body but a coalition of associations.

"What I said was that church bodies may find themselves making common cause with one or other affiliate of the UDF in regard to some grievance or project like rents or housing, but obviously this does not constitute identification with the UDF as a whole.

"It is a pity that we have to spend so much time on this kind of polemic. The cause of peace is far more important. We should be devoting more time and energy to that."