



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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December 3, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

As a result of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's November 3 state of emergency declaration, serious moral questions have been raised regarding that nation's commitment to human rights and democratic reform. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte acknowledged as much during comments made on November 18 when he said, "[R]ecent political actions against protestors, suppression of the media and the arrests of political and human rights leaders run directly counter to the reforms that have been undertaken in recent years."

Concern over the deteriorating situation in Pakistan led the Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference to meet on November 23 in Lahore in a special session. They discussed the imposition of the state of emergency and subsequent attacks on media, free expression, political activity and civil society in general as well as growing militancy in the North-West Frontier Province and Tribal Areas. At the meeting's conclusion, they called for a "meaningful, stable and sustainable democracy" in which political parties and civil society play their roles in building "inter-religious and inter-sectarian peace and harmony for a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan." A copy of their Call for End of Emergency is attached.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops stands in solidarity with the Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference and asks that you carefully consider their recommendations as you formulate and implement U.S. policy toward Pakistan.

Sincerely yours,

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy

Catholic Bishops Call for End of Emergency

Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference (PCBC), representing about 1.5 million Pakistani Catholics serving the country through hundreds of Schools, hospitals and social services met on November 23, 2007 at Lahore. They held a special session to discuss the situation in the country vis-à-vis, imposition of emergency, growing militancy in NWFP and Tribal areas, curbs on media, free expression and political unrest in the country.

The Bishops observed with deep concern that the situation after the imposition of emergency on November 3rd has worried Pakistanis, at home and abroad, about the stability and peaceful transition of democracy. The Bishops expressed their shock and condemnation over the attacks on civil society for merely expressing their right of conscience and free expression.

Peaceful gatherings of Lawyers and Human Rights activists were disrupted with brute force and also the media was suppressed as never before. We consider this to be a very bad sign for the country, and this grave concern is also voiced by the international community.

While we urge all Christians to pray to God almighty to give wisdom to decision makers who are expected to steer the nation out of this multiple crises, we would respectfully and strongly make the following recommendations on behalf of the people of Pakistan and the Church;

We recommend:

- Restoration of fundamental rights which would require lifting of the state of emergency and return to constitutional rule without delay.
- Since democracy is dependent on a proper justice system, therefore it is urgent and necessary to restore the independence of the judiciary. The judges placed under de facto house arrest must be allowed free movement and expression.
- Restrictions on the media do not match with ideals of a free nation therefore; all curbs on the print and electronic media must end.
- People detained after the imposition of emergency including; lawyers, political activists, students and human rights defenders must be released, immediately and unconditionally.
- An independent, credible and acceptable Election Commission must be constituted. There should be a level playing field for all parties to contest the coming general elections.
- The reign of terror of non-state agencies across the country has to be effectively countered through all possible means within the ambit of the law.

To achieve a meaningful, stable and sustainable democracy, the government should make efforts for a national reconciliation among the political parties and the civil society must be allowed to play their role at all levels for building a consensus on the issues of vital importance including the challenge to build inter-religious and inter-sectarian peace and harmony for a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan.

Archbishop Lawrence John Saldanha
Archbishop of Lahore
President, PCBC

Bishop Anthony T. Lobo
Bishop of Islamabad - Rawalpindi
Secretary General, PCBC