



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development

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April 30, 2008

The Honorable Dr. Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has followed the events in Chad over these past months with growing alarm. We are deeply concerned for poor and vulnerable people who have suffered because of the continued fighting and insecurity. The crisis in Chad contributes to regional instability, especially in connection with the conflict across the border in Darfur.

Our Conference echoes the concerns expressed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Chad in their Christmas Message, "For a True Peace". A copy (in French) is attached for your reference.

The Bishops of Chad note: "Violence has crystallized these days in the fighting that has renewed in the East of the country. But it manifests itself regularly in many other places bringing with it hopelessness and a sense of resignation within many leaders who are the most in touch with our people." They go on to say that this violence creates contempt that leads "many people to fall back on their ethnic groups of origin." The Bishops believe that peaceful coexistence in Chad is possible if the violence, and the ethnic divisions that violence creates, were to be effectively addressed.

The Bishops' Christmas Message called on all people of good will both in Chad and in the international community to search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the East that has threatened the whole country and for reconciliation among the Chadian people. The Church in Chad points out that fighting in Eastern Chad has caused the loss of precious lives and massive suffering, especially among the poorest people in the country. The Conference of Bishops in Chad has been very clear that the roots of conflict in Chad lie in a serious lack of good governance, which systematically excludes civil society and opposition from the political process, and regularly shows disregard for the rights of the human person, property rights and the common good. The government of Chad has also failed to deliver on its agreement to invest part of its oil revenues to alleviate poverty and improve the infrastructure of Chad.

The Bishops of Chad state that the security forces have neglected their duty to protect the people of Chad, concentrating more on countering Chadian rebel incursions from across the border. At times they have even contributed to insecurity. Military action is not the solution. If the crisis is not contained by means of peaceful dialogue promoting reconciliation, the Chadian conflict may well escalate further, contributing to regional insecurity in Chad, Sudan and the Central African Republic.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recognizes Congressional efforts to promote reconciliation, better democratic governance and transparency in Chad, such as the newly

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passed Senate Resolution [S.R.470]. We also acknowledge the efforts of the U.S. Department of State to seek a solution to the crisis in Chad and U.S. assistance to local and international humanitarian agencies such as Catholic Relief Services. However, the crisis warrants increased pressure on all parties to promote internal dialogue and pressure on the government of Chad to respect human rights and the rule of law. Our Conference remains concerned that further violence will lead to additional interruptions of the full deployment of the European Union Forces in Chad (EUFOR) and the UN Forces in Chad and the Central African Republic (MINURCAT), whose mandates are to protect refugees, internally-displaced persons and civilians in Eastern Chad.

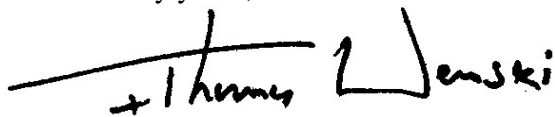
The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops urges the government of the United States to consider seriously the insights of the Bishops of Chad and strengthen high-level diplomatic attention to the situation in Chad. The U.S. should work more closely with the Government of France and others to:

1. Address the violence by calling on the government of Chad to respect human rights, the rule of law, and better control its security forces;
2. Call for an internal and inclusive dialogue among all parties, including civil society, to reduce conflict and work toward a viable long-term peace and improved governance; and
3. Ensure that EUFOR and MINURCAT have sufficient resources to support the protection of IDPs, refugees and civilians, as well as provide humanitarian agencies with the security needed to carry out their operations.

Our Conference reiterates its gratitude for the efforts to date taken by the United States to address both the humanitarian and political crises in Chad and commends the Catholic Church in Chad for its courage and integrity in taking a stand against the forces of ethnic division and violence. We urge the U.S. government to reach out to the all concerned parties to the conflict in an effort to tackle the root causes of instability and to promote reconciliation and a more just and peaceful society for the people of Chad.

Please be assured of the continued support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the search for peace for the people of Chad and the entire region.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski

Bishop of Orlando

Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

cc: Dr. Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs