



Pacific Conference of Churches

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May 16, 2020

**JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS,
NOT BRUTALITY AND OPPRESSION, FOR THE PACIFIC**

God, give the king your justice; your righteousness to the royal son. He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. The mountains shall bring prosperity to the people. The hills bring the fruit of righteousness. He will judge the poor of the people. He will save the children of the needy, and will break the oppressor in pieces... He will have pity on the poor and needy. He will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence. Their blood will be precious in his sight. (Psalm 72: 1-4 , 12-13)

There is no excuse for violence.

In recent months we have witnessed across the Pacific, the use by governments, of police and security forces, to deprive the people of their right to speak freely and without fear.

From the West, where 63 people have been jailed by Indonesia for speaking of freedom in West Papua and the Moluccas Islands, to the east where a police officer was imprisoned on brutality charges in Samoa.

But perhaps it is in Papua New Guinea and Fiji where the security forces – especially the police – are so often used as an extension of the ruling party to quell dissent among the populace.

When it is possible for politicians to use the police to arrest political rivals and private citizens, who voice concern about State policy, an injustice is committed.

When police are used by politicians, to selectively enforce public health laws, to stop a group of peaceful demonstrators at an institution of learning, an injustice is committed.

If people convicted in a court of law for killing citizens are released a week later by relatives or friends who hold political office, an injustice is committed.

We have seen the violence in the United States after the brutal killing of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer.

Our people have been quick to condemn this incident, thousands of miles from the Pacific. Yet they remain silent on the same issue in their own countries, fearful of a police force and its political masters who react swiftly and mercilessly on those who dare speak out.

Injustice of any kind and anywhere is wrong.

Today the Pacific churches, exercising their prophetic role to be the “watchmen” of society (Ezekiel 3:16-21), call on the leaders of the region to:

1. Ensure that justice and the rule of law is applied equally to all people despite differences in gender, ethnicity or faith;
2. Ensure that police and the military are not used as tools of politicians to subjugate the people;
3. Allow freedom of speech and assembly to listen to the genuine cries of those in need of a voice;
4. Allow free, vibrant media, trade unions and civil society in which peace and justice are the ultimate goal.

The Pacific churches also renew their call for governments in the region to support justice and freedom in Bougainville, Kanaky (New Caledonia), Maohi (French Polynesia) and West Papua.

As churches we are called to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ who spoke out against an unjust government, a cruel security force and a taxation system which crippled the poor to benefit the rich.

Let us renew our commitment today to stand against all forms of injustice and create communities in which we each love our neighbour.

In Peace,



Reverend JAMES S. BHAGWAN
General Secretary