

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH STATEMENT ON CRISIS IN KOSOVO

Released by the Office of Public Affairs at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters, 6 April 1999

The Seventh-day Adventist Church expresses its grave concern regarding the situation in Yugoslavia, in particular in the Kosovo province. While being concerned about the well-being of its many members and operation of its church organisation in this part of the world, the Church is even more concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in Kosovo and elsewhere in the region, with hundreds of thousands of displaced and homeless people.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world-wide religious community and, as a matter of principle, endeavours not to be involved in political issues. The Church has consistently refused to do so and intends to maintain this position in the current crisis centering on Kosovo. Nevertheless, it rejects the use of violence as a method for conflict resolution, be it ethnic cleansing or bombing.

With the Church's long tradition of working actively and quietly for human rights, including in particular religious freedom and the rights of minorities, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is ready to do its part. The Church will endeavour to do so through its world organisational structure, in co-operation with the leaders and members of

the Church in the Balkan region, to foster a deeper understanding of and greater respect for human rights and non-discrimination, to meet crying human needs, and to work for reconciliation between national, ethnic, and religious communities.

In the current crisis, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to doing what it can, through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA, the humanitarian agency established by the Church), to bring relief to the many thousands of refugees, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or social status, that have fled from the Kosovo province into neighbouring states, while also closely monitoring the situation and needs of the civilian population in Yugoslavia, in and outside of Kosovo. The Church will utilise its infrastructure in the region in its relief efforts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges the international community and government authorities involved to push for an early end to the crisis, on the basis of Christian, moral and ethical principles, of human rights, and good faith negotiations that are fair to all concerned and which may lead to better relationships.

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<http://www.adventpress.com/index1.html>

STATEMENT ON ETHNIC AND POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Issued by the Executive Committee of the South Pacific Division (SPD), 14 June 2000

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognises that this present world is plagued and divided by the results of sin, greed and hatred. A long history of tribal conflict, conquest, war, occupation and political division have left many peoples dispossessed of their land and displaced. There are no totally human solutions to the ethnic conflicts and racial injustices that exist. However, the Church believes that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is healing for human hearts and hope for a new world where justice and righteousness will prevail. Human dignity and equality can be restored through the grace of God in which humans see each other as members of the family of God. In the light of Calvary, hatred gives way to love, selfishness and greed are replaced by respect and service for others. Freedom and peace are the fruit of a life controlled by the Spirit of Christ.

RACISM

Scripture plainly teaches that every person was created in the image of God, who "made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). Racial and ethnic discrimination is an offence against our fellow human beings who were created in the image of God. In Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal 3:28).

Seventh-day Adventists therefore deplore any attitudes or activities that incite tribal or ethnic conflict or promote racial divisions. The Church upholds the ideal of racial equality and international harmony.

Seventh-day Adventists want to be faithful to the reconciling ministry assigned to the Christian Church. As a worldwide community of faith, the Seventh-day Adventist

Church wishes to witness to and exhibit in its own ranks the unity and love that transcend racial differences and overcome past alienation between races.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Scripture clearly teaches that government is divinely ordained, and that while our first and highest duty is to God, the Bible instructs Christians to be subject to "the powers that be" (Romans 13:1) and to perform their duties as faithful citizens (Matt 22:21). Seventh-day Adventists therefore do not support the overthrow of governments by force. The Church upholds the rule of law in a peaceful society.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the separation of church and state and maintains neutrality towards politics. The Church respects the various political processes that exist in different forms of government, but does not become involved in advising Church members in political matters or in supporting any particular parties. Church members who are involved in political or public life by their own personal choice are urged to do nothing that will discredit the cause of God or compromise the standards of the Church. They are encouraged to serve their country and community in a way that will uplift society and bring glory to God.

NON-COMBATANCY

Scripture reveals that life is sacred and has its source in God (Gen 1:11-27) and should not be taken by human hands (Ex 20:13; Matt 19:18). Christians are instructed to "love your enemies and do good to them that hate you" (Matt 5:44). Seventh-day Adventists are therefore opposed to bearing arms and taking up weapons in time of conflict. Rather than inflicting injury or harm on fellow human beings the Church encourages service to their country through loving ministry to the sick or injured. The Church upholds the ideal of peaceful resolution and of practicing the Golden Rule to "do unto others, what you would have men do to you" (Matt 7:12). With sadness and regret the Church acknowledges that in recent ethnic and political conflicts and coups in the Pacific, some former Seventh-day Adventists and current members have been involved. This would suggest that the Church may have failed in promoting the ideals of peace, equality and lawfulness. We confess that in the past our own attitudes to other Christians and those of other ethnic origins may have been unloving and less than the ideal. The values of human dignity, integrity and humility may not have been demonstrated as they should have been.

We therefore appeal to all Seventh-day Adventists to put away all ethnic and tribal differences and help create an atmosphere of co-operation and understanding between all races, cultures, faiths and political persuasions. We call on members to respect governments and the systems of law and justice, to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation in their communities.


We urge all men and women to pray for the peaceful resolution of present tensions and conflict. We challenge all Church administrators and pastors to pursue a more active role in educating members in a proper understanding of the Gospel and Biblical principles in respect to human relations, armed conflict and our relationship to God and Government, and

FURTHER: In the light of recent events in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, and the potential for further crises in the South Pacific:

1. To release the above statement on Ethnic and Political Tensions in the South Pacific and Christian Responsibility in Political Crisis, and
2. To acknowledge the need for Church administrators and pastors to take a more active role in educating church members and the community to a fuller understanding of the Gospel's application to human relations, and
3. To recommend the convening of a Consultation on Peace and Human Relations by a representative group as soon as is practical, to develop a strategy that will address the situation.

Source: South Pacific Division *Record*, July 8, 2000.

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