



JESUIT
INSTITUTE
SOUTH
AFRICA

“WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION MOCKS LIBERTY”

Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways!
(Proverbs 3:31)

The continued and escalating violence in South Africa is of grave concern. Violence always begets more violence. Violence causes immediate and long-term suffering to all and will not address the pertinent issues that need to be urgently addressed in this country.

South Africa has long been on a precipice. What we witness is symptomatic of a number of factors that cannot be ignored. The country's tragic history, endemic corruption, political infighting, moral decay, disregard for the law, and the unfavourable global economic conditions, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are among them. However, the burning, looting and destruction of property will not bring about change, it will deepen the crisis.

The words of the great prophet and champion of the oppressed of last century, Salvadorian Archbishop, Oscar Romero, ring true and are pertinent now:

“I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country... All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally.”

The Jesuit Institute South Africa urges those involved in violence to stop immediately. It is our own brothers and sisters that we are harming, not the elites or political tricksters who live securely and are shielded from the violence and destruction. They are not affected; they do not suffer. We appeal to you: stop the violence for your own sakes!

Furthermore, we urge that:

- Politicians from all persuasions stop using this crisis to manipulate people by spewing irresponsible comments and incitements in the media and on social media. You are not showing leadership by being politically expedient and this incitement must be condemned.
- Those who are inciting people on social media must be held accountable. Social media platforms have the moral responsibility to monitor incitement.
- There is a return to the rule of law and right processes respected, namely, the Constitution, and the judicial system.
- Religious leaders, address your followers, and offer direction in this time of crisis
- The high levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment are not “addressed” but acted upon in a concrete manner.
- That corruption is dealt with decisively. South Africans are tired of empty promises. Corruption has to be stamped out because this is a strong ingredient in the current crisis.

“The cause of liberty becomes a mockery if the price to be paid is the wholesale destruction of those who are to enjoy liberty” wrote the Trappist monk, theologian and social activist, Thomas Merton.

The liberty of all is threatened if South Africa responds to the massive challenges we face on the current violent trajectory. Our hard fought for democracy is at stake and will lead to the wholesale destruction of this land. The civil anarchy and mayhem must end. We appeal to all South Africans to stop the violence. Serious problems afflict us, this is undeniable, but violence will never move us forward.

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