

Holy Week Focus On Natal And South Africa

The situation in Natal has reached proportions which are beyond human understanding and endurance. Church and Political leaders who have been to the area, report untold damage in human and material terms.

This is the time for people of all faiths to exercise the gift and power of prayer and fasting for God's immediate intervention, that those who are in any way guilty of sin in that situation will repent and change their ways: With God, nothing is impossible.

Church Leaders are therefore calling on all people to use Holy Week - starting on the 9th April through to Easter Sunday - to focus on

prayer and fasting for the people of Natal in particular and South Africa as a whole.

All Ministers are requested to open their churches for prayers between 13h00 and 14h00 everyday from the 9th up to Easter Sunday. A joint service will be held on the 11th April from 12h30 to 14h00 at

Justice and Peace Service



Courtesy of WCC (IPIC)

"... We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead... On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, AS YOU HELP US BY YOUR PRAYERS. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many."

(2 Corinthians 1:8b-11)

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Pitched battles were fought in Caluza and the worst violence occurred in KwaShange and Henley areas. Revenge attacks were the order of the day, roads were blocked to traffic and patrolled by gangs of youths. Police patrols used shot-guns and teargas to disperse mobs attacking and burning houses.

The assault on Caluza continued with Inkatha forces massed in Mpumuza making forays into Smero, Siyamu, Esigodini and Ashdown. Police opened fire on comrades defending Caluza.

It was reported that a retaliatory attack by Ashdown youth into Phayiphini caused a number of deaths and burnt houses. Several incidents involved armed people in kitskonstable and police uniform supporting the assault.

On Thursday 29th a march of 500 women in protest of police partisanship was ordered to disperse. In contrast, police reaction to the invasion of UDF communities by Inkatha impis has been inadequate at best and partisan at worst. The police have not controlled the violence. Impis went shooting through KwaShange destroying houses and killing residents. Cattle were stolen and property destroyed. At KwaMnyanda more houses were attacked and torched and people were killed.

There were attacks and skirmishes as Inkatha forces probed into Caluza, Semro and Ashdown. In Ashdown there were clashes between police and residents. Later Ashdown was attacked by Inkatha supporters from Mpumuza.

Police failed to respond to calls for help from attacked communities. Although the police were unable to control the violence they refused to call on the South African Defense Force (SADF) to intervene. The SADF can only intervene on orders from the S.A. Police.

That evening, Inkatha forces returned to Elandskop, and during the night, attacked UDF homes at Khokwane and murdered 2 people.

Mphophomeni (near Howick) was attacked by 500 Inkatha impis. Police intervened and opened fire on the counter attackers. The Inkatha warriors regrouped at KwaShifi from whence they attacked the local Catholic Church.

The same evening conflict began in Imbali when Inkatha forces attacked UDF supporters, burnt homes and killed people.

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On Friday, 30 March the conflict continued into Imbali and Slangspruit where Inkatha attacked a number of homes. Eye witness accounts state that Inkatha warriors travelled through the township in lorries and private vehicles shooting at residents.

On Saturday 31 March, Mphophomeni was attacked again by Inkatha. Police intervened and killed 3 people and wounded 35. Attacks began again in Table Mountain.

At Imbali sporadic shooting continued throughout the day and increased in intensity at night. A number of deaths were reported.

On 3 April, the Table Mountain areas was again overrun by Inkatha supporters from MwaManayavu. It was reported that women and children were dragged from their homes and killed. Fourteen people died in the violence. It was too dangerous to enter the area on Wednesday, 4 April, as fighting still continued and a number of houses were destroyed. The area was overrun by warring factions from MwaManyavu. Police did not intervene to stop the impis from KwaManyavu moving into Maqongqo. The area is presently a war zone with warring factions engaged in running battles.

The violence continues.

2. SOME CONCLUSION

1. As the violence in Pietermaritzburg township continues there is still speculation as to what sparked off the violence. The leadership of Inkatha alleges that it was a revenge attack after UDF comrades stoned buses before and after the Inkatha Rally in Durban on Sunday 25th March 1990.
2. Inkatha forces have waged massive, concerted, planned and resourced attacks on a number of Vulindlela areas, Mphomphomeni, Edendale, Imbali and Table Mountain areas of the Pietermaritzburg region.
3. The S.A. Police took no effective action to control the violence and have not called on the SADF to intervene. There have been allegations that police openly supported Inkatha attackers and did not prevent attacks on UDF communities.
4. The violence has resulted in 104 deaths, 300 houses burnt and 14 000 displacees (refugees of unrest).
5. The Government has announced intensified measures to deal with the conflict situation and a co-ordinated security plan for Natal. The SADF and Police have been given instructions to bring the violence under control.

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6. The Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce has made appeals to the central government to have Pietermaritzburg declared a disaster area.

3. INTERVENTION BY CHURCHES

As indicated from reports local churches moved in into the crises, opened their churches and facilities to house the displacees. A crisis committee, called Pietermaritzburg Crisis Co-ordination Committee was formed on the 29th March consisting of a broad range of organisations including churches. The Committee deals with monitoring, relief and refugees, missing persons and body identification, funerals, legal, medical and health matters.

Church leaders nationally paid a pastoral visit to the victims in Pietermaritzburg, Friday last week and a delegation of church leaders had meetings with the Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi on the one hand and Mr. Mandela on the other to try to resolve the impossible. These talks are continuing. A meeting with the State President, Mr. de Klerk is scheduled for Wednesday to address amongst other issues the Pietermaritzburg situation.

Church leaders have called on churches and people of South Africa to contribute to a national crisis fund which will be co-ordinated from the national office of the SACC. Donations in the form of clothes, blankets, etc. have been called for.

4. CONSEQUENCES OF THE VIOLENCE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The statistics presently stand at 104 killed, 300 homes burnt, and 14 000 people displaced. These were available figures at the time of the compilation of this motivation, however, these figures may increase as other areas are still engaged in war. There are also reports of bodies which have not yet been removed from where fighting had occurred, for fear for further attacks.

The black communities of the Edendale Valley and Vulindlela areas of Pietermaritzburg have suffered the consequences of ideological warfare between UDF/Inkatha.

Homes have been destroyed by fire and household goods and belonging lost in the looting. 14 000 people are homeless - taking shelter in churches and school buildings at St. Alberts Catholic Mission and St. James Anglican Church at Esigodeni, at Thuthukua Centre (Methodist Church, Georgetown), at Caluza and Machibisa in the African Congregational Church and Welcome Church and at Dambuza in the AME Church.

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The displacees from Table Mountain are housed in tents at Masons Mill in Edendale. These displacees need care and emergency resources to care for their immediate needs.

They are living under the most appalling conditions with urgent needs for basic utensils, mattresses, food, medicines, blankets and toilet facilities. A number of families have lost loved ones who were killed in the conflict and there is need for financial resources for their funerals.

Large numbers need transport and storage facilities for their belongings that they need to salvage from their destroyed homes. They need transport also to go to the mortuary to identify bodies of family members killed in the conflict.

All the homeless need to have their homes reconstructed or replaced because of the destruction. They cannot be housed in Churches and school buildings on a long term basis.

Schools in the area have closed and the education of the children disrupted. Many have educational financial needs as all the family savings have been used up in the emergency unrest situation in which they find themselves. Most school children have lost uniforms and books in the fire that destroyed their homes.

As some city businesses are forced to close because of the unrest and lack of labour force, thousands affected by the violence are threatened with unemployment and would require unemployment assistance.

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