

The Antilles Episcopal Conference at their Annual Plenary Meeting in Rome (23rd – 26th April) issued the following STATEMENT concerning situations in Suriname and Venezuela.

SURINAME

We, the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference express solidarity with the people of Suriname at this difficult stage of their history, as they await the verdict of the Court on the matter of the December 8th 1982 killings.

It is a deep concern of many leaders in Suriname and the international community that the result of this case may bring social unrest regardless of the verdict.

In our concern for justice and peace in the region, we ask CARICOM and the international community to accompany the Government and the people of Suriname during this difficult time. We call for a process to ensure that this impasse becomes an opportunity for reconciliation among all parties involved and the nation as a whole.

While we acknowledge the legitimate authority of the Court to adjudicate in this matter, we believe there is a need to also express our concern for order, stability and harmony in the nation in the short and medium term.

We pledge solidarity with Bishop Choennie, the Christian Council and the Inter Religious Council. We support their efforts to bring peace and reconciliation to Suriname. We pray that Almighty God will guide the leaders, the families of victims, the Judiciary and the Government of Suriname towards a path of Justice, Peace and lasting Reconciliation for the people of Suriname.

VENEZUELA

We have also noted the worsening humanitarian situation in Venezuela. The political problems there have resulted in scarcity of food, medicine and basic necessities. It has led to a stream of refugees to neighboring countries. These countries are not equipped to deal with such calamities.

We therefore urge the international community, especially CARICOM, to help seek a lasting solution to the political impasse in Venezuela. We ask our people to be generous to the refugees and provide them with the essentials, such as food and shelter. We stand with our brother bishops in Venezuela as they discern the way forward for the Venezuelan people. We regret that innocent lives, especially of children, are at stake through undernourishment and the degeneration of medical and educational facilities.

May Our Lady of Coromoto keep her Venezuelan children under her mantle.

