



Pacific Conference of Churches

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PACIFIC CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES' STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN KANAKY NEW CALEDONIA

The Pacific Conference of Churches stands in deep solidarity with our sisters and brothers of Kanaky in this time of political crisis that has led to the eruptions of violence these past few days and nights.

The violence that the country is currently experiencing are once again endangering the dignity of the life of every human being in the territory.

As we pray and call for a cessation of violence, by all sides, we are also cognisant of the reality that what we have witnessed, not only over the past few days, but in the months since the fist of the French Government began to squeeze tighter on the throats of the Kanak people as they continue to cry from the depths of their hearts for their own experience of liberty, equity and fraternity.

It cannot be ignored that eruption of violence is the manifestation of the pain, trauma and frustration of a community who have consistently had their indigenous and political rights undermined, by a French government whose rhetoric of being a "Pacific nation" is exposed by its actions.

The situation in which Kanaky New Caledonia finds itself is an expression of the political failure to take responsibility for the emancipation of the Kanak people and the communities present in the territory and for its common destiny. We note that more than thirty years after the Nouméa Accords, the political position of the French state does not seem to have changed, and its neutrality with regard to the decolonisation process undertaken with the country is no longer honoured.

On 2 April, the Senate voted unhesitatingly to unfreeze the electoral roll, pretending to ignore one of the weapons of those who want to kill the Nouméa Accord and bury the question of full sovereignty once and for all. On Wednesday 15 May, the National Assembly voted in favour of the constitutional bill to unfreeze New Caledonia's electoral body.

This follows numerous requests for a postponement of the 3rd referendum from pro-independence activists, politicians, historians, associations, churches and NGOs to President Macron and his then Minister Mr LECORNU, to allow the Kanak and Caledonian families bereaved by Covid 19 to mourn. The French colonial state decided to maintain the 3rd referendum consultation, which led to a call for the non-participation of the living forces in favour of independence so as not to take part in the plot hatched by French colonialism. This facilitated a victory for the "no" vote of 96.50%, for a turnout of 43.87% without the indigenous Kanak people and the pro-independence political parties, compared with a turnout of 81% in 2018 and 85.69% in 2020.

As a reminder, the French government did not respect the promise made by the Prime Minister at the time, Mr Edouard PHILIPPE, not to initiate the referendum before the 2022 presidential election. The consequences of this "passage en force" on the 3rd referendum on 12 December 2021 are still with us today.

After 20 years of consensual management, the breakdown in dialogue between the French government and the independence fighters and the Kanak people is now a reality. And the close collaboration between the French government and the local right-wing (pro-French) is in the open, between the appointment of Mme BACKES as Secretary of State for Citizenship, who also holds the post of President of the Southern Province, and the appointment of 2 New Caledonian MPs as rapporteurs for the various reforms undertaken by the State on the New Caledonian dossier in the National Assembly, Mr Metzdorf & Dunoyer.

Thus, without fear or regard for the Kanak people, the French colonial state proudly displays its impartiality in dealing with the post-Matignon-Oudinot and Nouméa Accord issues.

The process of humanisation is a challenge for the people of Kanaky New Caledonia, who are rich in different heritages and multiple cultures, challenged by globalisation and its effects and consequences. They need to engage in a great palaver once again. When the 'duologue' is vital and unavoidable, this discussion will give rise to a new vision of the spoken word that can build the future Do Kamô, whose values are already anticipated: Kanak and customary values, Oceanian values, Christian values, republican values.

In 1979, the Evangelical Church in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands adopted the Guarou Declaration at its synod, which proclaimed the Kanak people's claim to independence from the political situation of the time. The Church took a stand against all forms of injustice and exactions committed by a colonial state and its oppressive system, after deep theological reflection on the theme of human liberation from the chains of oppression and dehumanisation created by a destructive colonial system.

In line with this stance, at the 12th General Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches in November 2023, the Protestant Church of Kanaky New Caledonia

proposed "DoKamo: Christ Transforms Us into Your New Humanity" as its regional theme. An encouragement to our Pasifika and Oikumene family to reflect on the situation of our humanity and its capacity for resilience and transformation in the face of the challenges of modern society in the Pasifika House of God.

The concept of DoKamo, which comes to us from the Ajie-Arô region, invites us to a process of humanisation and transformation. Introducing the idea of a humanity in permanent evolution, the concept of DoKamo underlines the profound multidimensional connection of human beings with their land and the nature that makes it up and defines them, with their ancestors and their intangible heritage, with the members of their community and with others. This extraordinarily rich interconnection should lead us towards a more conscious, higher existence. While the concept of the human being as a permanent work in progress involves a perpetual search for being and becoming, for existence in harmonious relationship with its different forms of relationship, one direction is clearly defined, that of the dignity of life. The transformation of the human being is aimed solely at building or equipping the human being with values, skills, mastery, knowledge, know-how, interpersonal skills and knowledge of the future, so that he or she can fully exercise the first human profession: living. The Kanak existential vision demands, through its education, to live fully in dignity.

This requirement enables them to define their relationship with the cosmos, with nature, with others, with foreigners, with time, with space, with words, with their environment, etc.

The new human being is called upon to seek his "Do Kamoïté" in order to live together in peace and love in the country.

The Pacific Conference of Churches therefore urges:

1. The members of the Église protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie, to sister churches, to sister religions and to all believers in Kanaky, to appeal for prayer, solidarity and compassion in this time of crisis: all human life is precious and sacred, whatever one's political opinions or ethnic origin. We all possess, as we are, the sacred gift of life that God offers us;
2. The political, customary and religious leaders, and all who call Kanaky home, to practice responsibility, calm and peace in this time of crisis;
3. The State and Government of New Caledonia to ban the sale and use of firearms;
4. Our members churches and national councils of churches, and to regional and global partners, for prayer and solidarity to support the voice of the people in the region and internationally. We further call the World Council of Churches, through the Commission of Churches on International Affairs to make this issue a priority of its work through engagement with the French Government and the United Nations Committees on Decolonisation (C24 and 4th Committee) in both its Geneva and New York offices.

5. The French State to honour its impartial role in the decolonisation process by immediately withdrawing the constitutional bill to unfreeze the electorate and to immediately initiate an equitable dialogue process, facilitated by a neutral third party; and
6. The UN to lead an impartial and competent dialogue mission to monitor critically the alarming situation in the country.

In service of the Pasifika Household,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Shri Bhagwan', written in a cursive style.

James Shri Bhagwan (Rev.)