

Church leaders decry move to lift sanctions

By Ines Pinto Alicea
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholic, Protestant and Muslim religious leaders joined to condemn President George Bush's decision to lift economic sanctions against the white minority-ruled country of South Africa, saying the decision "signals a return to cooperation with the evils of racial domination."

In a July 11 letter to President Bush, three Catholic, one Muslim and two Protestant leaders of U.S. religious organizations said they felt "pain and disappointment" over President Bush's July 10 decision to lift economic sanctions imposed on South Africa in 1986 to pressure the government to end its system of racial separation.

"The United States must stand for abundant freedom and a vigorous democracy, not half measures of freedom and an imitation of democracy," the religious leaders said.

"The sanctions imposed by the United States against South Africa represented our refusal to support a system of government that placed one racial group over another," they added.

The letter said the group disagreed with the "president's conclusion" that conditions of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act had been met.

The 1986 act calls on South Africa to release all political prisoners as well as meet a number of other conditions, including:

- Repealing the state of emergency;
- Allowing banned political parties full participation in the political process;
- Repealing laws that require registration of black South Africans and restrict where they live;
- Entering into negotiations with the black South African majority with no pre-

conditions.

In announcing his decision, President Bush said South Africa made "irreversible" changes that warranted lifting the sanctions and he urged U.S. cities, states and institutions that had their own laws against doing business with South Africa to remove the laws from the books.

Since last February President de Klerk has legalized the African National Congress and other anti-apartheid organizations, released Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, lifted the national state-of-emergency regulations, drastically curtailed security legislation, invited black leaders to negotiate the country's future and secured the repeal of major apartheid laws.

The U.S. religious leaders argued that while the state of emergency had been lifted "police are (still) permitted to declare 'unrest areas'" and restrict people from assembling. They also said that black South Africans still cannot participate fully in the political process.

The religious leaders criticized the Bush administration for accepting "without question" the white minority government's view of whether it had met the law's conditions and "ignored evidence from independent human rights and religious organizations that political prisoners remain."

Amnesty International has said that some 850 political prisoners are still in jail, though President Bush said in announcing his decision that the State Department had informed him that all political prisoners had been released in recent weeks.

The letter added that black South Africans do not "enjoy full political participation" since they do not have voting rights. The religious leaders called into question "the good faith of de Klerk's negotiations" with the black political groups be-



AP/Wide World Photos

PROTESTING PRICES — A lone demonstrator shouts slogans during a July 9 rally near the presidential palace in Manila, the Philippines. The rally coincided with a transport strike called to demand the reduction of prices for gasoline and other oil products.

cause of the "reign of terror" which they said might be instigated by "South African security forces."

They accused the Bush administration of having a double standard with regard to the sanctions' requirement of full political participation.

"In Poland, Nicaragua and Angola the Bush administration has pushed hard for free and fair elections," they said. "We believe the same standard should apply to South Africa."

The U.S. Catholic Conference said it would continue to support the South African Catholic Bishops Conference stand that economic pressure helps "dismantle apartheid."

"We fear that the removal of sanctions prematurely could delay and complicate the difficult process of substantive negotiations to shape a new and more just future for all South Africans," said John Carr, the U.S. bishop's secretary of the depart-

ment of social development and world peace.

Carr added that the USCC would continue to support sanctions in its own investment policies until the South African Bishops Conference "indicates that they have achieved their full purpose."

Meanwhile in South Africa, Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, an outspoken critic of apartheid, said the time was right to lift the sanctions against the country.

Pax Christi USA in letters to congressional leaders July 12 stated its disagreement with President Bush. "While we welcome the many changes that have already occurred in South Africa," the letters said, "we recognize that until a constitutional democracy is established that allows for full participation, majority rule and protection of minority rights, South Africa's future is still uncertain and there can be no guarantees of the irreversibility of the changes already made."

Retired bishop of Brooklyn dies of heart attack at 77

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — Retired Brooklyn Bishop Francis J. Mugavero, known for his efforts to fight for the poor and fight against racism and anti-Semitism, died early July 12 from a severe heart attack he suffered in his sleep while vacationing on Long Island. He was 77.

A Mass of Christ the High Priest for Bishop Mugavero, who served 21 years as bishop of Brooklyn, was scheduled for July 17.

"With the death of our beloved Bishop Mugavero we have lost a great human being," said a statement by Brooklyn Bishop Thomas V. Daily, Bishop Mugavero's successor.

Bishop Mugavero, born June 8, 1914, was the diocese's fifth bishop and the first Brooklyn native to govern the Brooklyn see — the fifth largest U.S. diocese in terms of Catholic population but by far its

smallest in terms of geographical size.

Bishop Mugavero was appointed by Pope Paul VI as bishop of Brooklyn in 1968.

Ordained a priest of the Brooklyn Diocese in 1940, he served as executive director of Catholic Charities in the diocese, and later was secretary for charities under his predecessor, Archbishop Ryan J. McEntegart.

His interest in social welfare led to the creation of the U.S. bishops' Campaign for Human Development, supported by an annual national collection to fight U.S. poverty at the local and national levels.

The CHD came about after Bishop Mugavero sponsored a resolution at the 1969 U.S. bishops' meeting calling for a "national Catholic crusade against poverty." He then chaired a committee to formulate the specifics of the crusade,

which resulted in the CHD.

Bishop Mugavero was also seen as a leader in Catholic-Jewish relations.

Racism was often placed on Bishop Mugavero's agenda, dating back to 1971, when he condemned the wrecking by whites of a house built for a Chinese family to keep the neighborhood white.

More recently, the bishop tried to defuse racial tensions following race-related murders in Howard Beach in 1987 and Brooklyn's Bensonhurst neighborhood in 1989.

Bishop Mugavero also spoke out strongly on church teaching on abortion, issuing 20 pastoral letters on the subject, and on homosexuality.

He opposed proposed New York gay rights ordinances in 1974, 1978 and 1986, saying in 1986 that "legitimate application of existing laws" was sufficient. After a 1986 Vatican letter on homosexuality, he

ordered diocesan priests to withdraw support from Dignity, an organization of homosexual Catholics at odds with church teaching on homosexual activity.

But the bishop did not object to a 1984 New York City executive order barring agencies from receiving city funds if they discriminated on the basis of — among other things — sexual orientation. And a 1976 pastoral letter on sexuality, because of its pastoral approach, led some critics to charge he was not faithful to church teaching on the subject.

In 1969 Bishop Mugavero issued a pastoral letter on priestly celibacy, calling it "a necessary grace in a modern church."

His 1972 pastoral letter called for an end to U.S. intervention in Vietnam "as quickly as possible," adding that criticism of U.S. Vietnam policy "must not be interpreted as a sign of disloyalty."

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