

Justice and Peace Commission  
Catholic Bishops 'Conference of Myanmar (CBCM)  
No 292/A, Pyay Road, Sanchaung T.S. Yangon

General Assembly of Catholic Bishops (June 4 – 8, 2013)

Unanimously approved the Advocacy Guidelines submitted to the Catholic Bishops Conference of Myanmar by Justice & Peace Commission for deliberation and ratification.

Signed,

Bishop Raymond Saw Po Ray,

Chairman

Justice & Peace Commission

***Statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM)***

***To the Leaders and the People of Myanmar***

We the Catholic Bishops of Myanmar warmly greet our country men and women and the leaders, wishing greater peace, brotherhood and prosperity to all.

Myanmar, our beloved nation, is standing at the exciting juncture of its historical journey. Blessed by Divine bounty of natural resources, mineral resources and human resources, our nation is courted by the world today. We are a rainbow nation of diverse cultures.

As the leaders of Catholic community, drawn from various ethnic backgrounds, we rejoice with our country men and women in the turn of events in the recent times. After long night of silent tears, our nation wakes up to a dawn of hope. Hope is seen in the expanding democratic space and a parliament where diverse views are discussed without fear or favour, release of political prisoners, lifting media restrictions and increasing access to human rights. The future has a promise. We warmly welcome the reform measures of the government.

We are pastors concerned with the holistic dignity of all human beings. As followers of Christ who asked us to be at the service of the vulnerable people and see God in service to others “When you do to the least of my brethren you do it to me” (Matthew 25: 40), Church responds to the spiritual and physical suffering of the people. Our observations are guided by the “Catholic Social Teachings” and inspired by Popes – Pope John Paul II who insisted that “if the world want peace, let it work for Justice” and the present Pope Francis’ observation: “Service is power – Economic Justice is the integral to human dignity.”

In this spirit of our commitment to welfare of all our country men and women, on the occasion of the National Bishops Conference of Myanmar, we wish to issue this statement.

We urge that this promising start of a long march towards total freedom and human brotherhood show greater sensitivity to the following emerging challenges of our new nation:

- We strongly urge all to recognize that human asset is the greatest asset. Every human being has the God given right to full development facilitated by free and compulsory education. The government must ensure quality education for all. Historically the church has contributed towards education and health and we assure our whole hearted collaboration in nation building.
- This nation has been wounded by a refusal to accept the traditional rights of all indigenous groups, who lived for generations in this country. The political attempts to recognize their uniqueness, their right to self-determination, right to management of resources were not sustained in Myanmar history, forcing agonizing suffering through war, conflict, human trafficking, drug-menace. This needs to end with the hope nurtured by every citizen for dignity and fair play in this nation. Genuine peace in this country will be built only on the

acceptance of indigenous communities as equal partners in the journey of democracy. These communities have suffered heavily during non-democratic era. We expect a fair and just recognition as dreams of democracy dawns. We wish to live as brothers and sisters in a new nation.

- We are saddened by the lack of political will in ending ethnic conflicts, specially the Kachin conflict. While welcoming the recent peace talk and futile attempt at cease fire in some area, we urge the government to address the root-causes of conflict, respect the rights of the internally displaced people and seek durable solutions to all conflicts. This nation belongs to all and a true federalism will bring lasting peace and development.
- The glory of Buddhism as enunciated in its shining principles of metta and karuna is amplified through words of compassion, love for the vulnerable and welcoming all as brothers and sisters. We strongly condemn the recent violent activities of some fundamentalists indulging in mutual killing among communities in Arakan, Lashio, Meikhtila and other places. We plead with all that the hard earned space for democracy and reform need to be guarded from all fundamentalist forces that threaten to tear the fabric of this nation. Peace is possible and the only way forward for this nation is the path of peace and justice.
- God's blessings to this nation in natural resources are to be protected and not opened to international exploitation. The loss of land of the poor farmers, land concessions to corporate interests marginalize the poor. We call upon affirming land rights to all.
- Religious diversity is the strength of this nation. Attempts to dilute this fundamental right must be resisted by all. The government must ensure protection, promotion and fulfilment of religious rights of all especially the minority communities. Specially it must promote their cultural rights through allowing educational institutions.
- Millions of our country men and women are away from their homes as refugees, internally displaced people and illegal migrants. Their silent tears and inhuman treatment in yonder lands cry out for justice. We urge the government to work towards return of all the refugees and internally displaced people to their homes.

God has set this nation on a divine destiny with all blessings. Despite the streaks of darkness, a new dawn awaits this nation beckoning to fulfil its dreams of becoming a golden land of the opportunity for all. Our unity in diversity is a strength. We urge leaders and people of good will of our nation to lead this nation out of hatred, affirming the rights of the poor and the vulnerable, blessings and development to all our country men and women.

Signed,

Bishop Conference Chairman