PRESS STATEMENT

“For Love of our country, work for peace and unity”

1. INTRODUCTION

We, the Catholic Bishops of Kenya, meeting at the Bishop Stam Pastoral and Animation Centre, Kakamega, greet you dear Kenyans and all people of goodwill. We feel the need to address you on the issues that concern all of us, for a peaceful and God loving Nation. Aware that in the past press releases we have addressed you on a range of issues that affect us directly, we still feel the obligation to raise our voice and call to your attention on those that are of immediate concern. Grateful of the efforts that have been made so far and aware of the progress achieved in several areas, we are however fully conscious of the enormous task still ahead and the call for individual, collective and committed responsibility on the part of each Kenyan to join hands together and build a peaceful Kenya.

Kenya is a country that is blessed in so many ways. Despite the challenges the country has faced since independence, we are grateful that we have come this far. It is only fair that we pause to think of where we have come from and where we are going.

2. JOURNEY TOWARDS PEACEFUL ELECTIONS

One area that has always been a challenge to us Kenyans is that of general elections. It seems our worst behaviour as a nation comes out before, during and after elections. As we prepare ourselves for the general elections of 2017, we note with concern the resurgence of violence, confrontational languages and hate speeches that can plunge us again, as a country, into the situation we were in, in the year 2007-2008 that almost deteriorated into a civil conflict.

It is now clear that the election fever is increasingly gaining momentum and many are positioning themselves to be elected. This means that already
the country has been put on campaign mood at the expense of service delivery and development. We note with concern that leaders are abandoning their responsibilities and shuttling from one corner to another seeking to secure a place for 2017 elections. Politicians are tearing into one another and making dangerous statements capable of whipping up ethnic tensions, clashes and violent political rivalry. Accusations and counter accusations are being traded at the expense of the truth. It is evident that politicians and aspirants are already set for 2017 elections. Where does this leave Kenya?

It has now become a pattern that every time we approach the election year violence erupts in many parts of the country. Already lives have been lost in the conflict between the Pokots and the Marakwets. There are ongoing clashes between Kisii, Masai and Kipsigis communities.

Recently violence was reported in Turkana County following the by-election for the Member of County Assembly (MCA) of Kalokol Ward. A shooting spree between rival Jubilee and Cord supporters left two children with gunshot wounds. The people of Kalokol Ward witnessed an election related fracas never seen in that area before.

This surge in violence in this country, especially those related to politicians jostling for power in 2017 is reaching levels that should worry all of us. The lives of Kenyans are very precious and anybody threatening or attacking hem has no place in any decent and civilized society. We condemn these acts of violence in the strongest terms and we call for the arrest of any person inflicting violence and continuous suffering to others.

It is now clear that if strong action is not taken, there is real concern that the Government might not be able to control the violence that may erupt during election time.

Dear Kenyans, elections come and go. We must never allow ourselves to be used for political expediency every election period, only to be left wounded, maimed, hopeless and divided more than ever before. Who is benefitting from these conflicts? Why must political opportunists always take advantage of us and use us to destroy our great country? We must persistently reject any attempt to take us back to the dark days of election related violence. We call upon everybody to be conscious of the obligation to work towards a peaceful process of elections. We are hopeful that the
institutions created for this purpose will be credible and ensure transparent processes that will lead to free and fair elections.

3. PERPETUAL INFIGHTING AMONG ELECTED LEADERS

We have noted with concern the infighting among the elected leaders in some of our counties. It is very painful that these leaders, obviously because of greed, are continuously impeaching one another, trading accusations and counter accusations and even physically fighting to the detriment of development and well being of the citizens who elected them. There are counties where service delivery has stopped and all activities paralyzed, yet these leaders continue earning their fat salaries, awarding themselves, their relatives and cronies, lucrative contracts, while some are looting the coffers of the county. All those committing economic crimes should not only be brought to face the law, but their ill-gotten wealth must be confiscated and returned to where it belongs.

The kind of leadership we are witnessing is no longer about service and the effort to bring development to counties and the country, but it is all about which position has more money and power so as to access the resources for it will be their turn “to eat”. These elected leaders are ready to protect their positions with all means, including violence.

We particularly appeal to all political leaders, aspirants and supporters, civil servants to mind the good of our country, and to conduct themselves peacefully, to restrain their supporters from any form of violence and conflict.

We call upon each one of you to endeavour to identify honest and credible candidates, and to vote on the basis of credibility and integrity rather than handouts and empty political rhetoric. We call upon these leaders to stop the incessant infighting and commit themselves to the work which they have been elected to do.

4. POLITICAL REALIGNMENTS

Political realignments based on tribal and sectional considerations should not be the criteria of 2017 election campaigns in the counties and in our
country. We must eradicate this mentality of having “one of our own” at the expense of other communities. This will threaten the peace in areas where there are many communities living together.

5. HATE SPEECH

We wish to caution, again and again, our politicians to avoid inflammatory language, and the tendency to set one community against the other. There are those politicians known for uttering what amounts to hate speech. As election period is around the corner let them promote peace and harmony among all communities.

6. POLITICS IN PLACES OF WORSHIP

The Church is called to be the conscience of the society. Consequently those working in the Church must be seen to be above party politics. They cannot be seen to favour this or that political camp. We call upon the clergy not to use the Church or the pulpit to promote any political candidate. It is important to note that Church law forbids priests from engaging in politics or presenting themselves for elections to political positions. The nature of their calling makes them signs of unity to the people living in their jurisdiction.

We have further stated in our earlier statements that as Catholic bishops we are not going to allow our Churches and Church functions to be used as campaign platforms and forum of hate speech. As much as politicians and those aspiring to elective positions are free to worship and pray where they want, they should not use such opportunities to make their campaign statements. Consequently politicians should not be allowed to address the congregations in our houses of worship. Let them be respected.

7. RESURGENCE OF MEGA CORRUPTION

We the Catholic bishops in our April press release addressed the disease of corruption in Kenya. It is unfortunate that this evil seems to be perpetrated without shame or fear. That now there are allegations of mismanagement of funds meant for health services yet again brings the
country to another low. We are left wondering what is exactly going on. Is this happening even when other cases have not been dealt with? Or are we being treated to propaganda as a campaign tool for 2017? Is it possible that all have become helpless in the face of this growing monster? We have insisted again and again that those who have been entrusted to govern this country must be people free from corruption, who hate corruption and are willing to fight corruption to the end. Half hearted actions will not do; tolerating corruption and letting those considered “untouchable” free to loot the taxpayers’ money for the sake of political expediency shows weak leadership in the fight against corruption. The time to act is now if we want this country to be a place of “plenty and prosperity” as we sing in our national anthem. We don’t want to be counted among the generation that lost the dream our ancestors had when they fought for the independence and prosperity of Kenya. We as religious leaders are willing to facilitate a forum to address the issues of corruption with sobriety, away from political rhetoric. We seek to reason together to see how we can strategically address this vice. As a point of departure all those implicated with credible evidence should step aside.

8. VALUE BASED EDUCATION CURRICULUM REVIEW

We wish to note with a lot of appreciation the positive measures that have been taken with regards to the credibility of our national examinations. The fact that KCPE started and proceeded without major incidents is a sign that it is possible to have untainted examinations in Kenya. As the KCSE exams are underway, signs are that some form of sanity and integrity is slowly being restored, and it is hoped that this process will go on to completion and be reflected in the results.

As we commend the Cabinet Secretary for Education, the TSC and the Examinations Council, and indeed all who have been actively involved, we would note that if everybody was serious about fighting corruption and impunity, it would be possible to eradicate it once and for all. This kind of spirit should be extended to all other sectors and emulated by other ministries. The recognition that chaplaincies are very key aspects of formation of the youth in our educational institutions is a laudable move should be encouraged. We join and support such efforts to promote quality and formative education.
We, however, would like to point out a danger that is looming in regard to the formation of our children in the schools. The ongoing curriculum review has to be value based which takes into account our religious and cherished African values. Our children ought to be given religious education right from the time they join school. These children need such a formation at an early age so as to grow to be respectful, God-fearing, hardworking, honest and orderly people.

We, as a nation, are in a position to map out our own destiny and know our own sets of values that are good to our children without depending on outside people who don’t share our values and have their own agenda to propagate. We must reject outside interference from those who are bent to derail our young people from our God given values that are at the heart of our moral fabric.

We therefore as bishops reject a curriculum which excludes religious education at all levels of education, and where sexuality is not within a context of good values.

9. TERRORISM

It is very painful to note the frequent loss of lives due to terrorists in those areas of our country that border Somalia. We deplore all attacks to Kenyans and other innocent persons. It depends on each of us, not to give space to those recruiting or radicalizing our youth. As we urge the government to do more, we appeal to all that terrorism does not solve anything. The intention of these evil people is clear – to create animosity between Christians and Muslims in this country. We should never succumb to this temptation for evil can only be overcome by good. What unites us as human beings is more than where we come from or the religion that we adhere to. Let us always work for what unites us as human beings.

10. SOUTH SUDAN

The situation of endless strife in South Sudan is worrying. There are many refugees entering Kakuma camp from South Sudan. We call upon the Kenyan Government to work with other nations for a lasting solution to the
problems facing South Sudan. Kenya has to take her traditional role of brokering peace in South Sudan.

11. CONCLUSION

The well being and prosperity of our Country depends on all of us. This is the only Kenya we have and we must guard our liberties jealously so that those who come after us will find a country where there is peace and harmony. We should never allow few individuals to spoil the peace in Kenya and interfere with our inheritance. We have to learn to choose what is good and reject what is evil and all that is bedevilling our country as we strive to improve the lives of our people. Together we can build a country that is just and free from corruption, a country that is orderly and respects the rule of law and a country where the dignity of every person is respected and valued.

We call upon all our Catholics and all people of good will to pray for Kenya so that we can have peace and build a one united nation.

GOD BLESS KENYA

Signed: ________________________ Date: 11th November 2016
Rt. Rev. Philip Anyolo
Chairman
Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops / Homa Bay

Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa, Vice Chairman (KCCB) / Ngong

His Eminence John Cardinal Njue / Nairobi

Most Rev. Zacchaeus Okoth / Kisumu
Most Rev. Peter Kairo / Nyeri
Most Rev. Martin Kivuva Musonde / Mombasa

Rt. Rev. Cornelius Arap Korir / Eldoret
Rt. Rev. Joseph Mairura Okemwa Kisii
Rt. Rev. Alfred Rotich / Military Ordinariate
Rt. Rev. Maurice Crowley / Kitale
Rt. Rev. Norman Wambua King’oo / Bungoma
Rt. Rev. Peter Kihara, IMC / Marsabit
Rt. Rev. David Kamau Ng’ang’a / Aux. Bishop Nairobi
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Rt. Rev. Emmanuel Barbara / Malindi
Rt. Rev. Joseph Mbatia / Nyahururu
Rt. Rev. Joseph Obanyi Sagwe / Kakamega
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