



The Holy See

***LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS****

*To His Excellency Mr Kofi Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations*

The deteriorating situation in Zaire urges me to express my deep concern to you. I nonetheless trust in the international community's potential for a concerted action to prevent more tragic developments.

The conflicts raging in the eastern part of the country are once again plunging the population into human tragedies which cannot leave the leaders of nations insensitive.

The news I have received from the Dioceses affected by the current operations testifies to the state of violence and neglect in which thousands of people are forced to live.

I cannot remain indifferent to the plight of these brothers and sisters in humanity, and I encourage all the efforts made, both locally and at an international level, for the immediate ceasefire.

However, the necessary pacification will only have lasting effects if Rwandan refugees in Zaire return to their country in safety and with dignity. This will only be possible with the co-operation of the international community and the peaceful involvement of the African countries.

In Zaire as elsewhere, it is essential that the principle of territorial integrity be absolutely respected, if we do not wish to open the way to every excess. This is why the international community must give priority to seeing that the law is precisely applied and to promoting actions that will actually improve the population's lot.

I think that co-operation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity is

becoming increasingly necessary for an equitable solution to all the problems affecting the life of the peoples in the Great Lakes region. Finally, it will be easier to carry out a task of such magnitude — which will certainly call for negotiations between all the parties involved — if the process of democratization begun in Zaire is completed. It is necessary to encourage all people of goodwill, both inside and outside the country, to create favourable conditions for a national dialogue that respects all ethnic or political sympathies, a dialogue in which the Catholic Church will also make her full contribution.

I would be grateful if Your Excellency would inform the members of the Security Council of the contents of this Letter.

As I thank you for your kind attention to my intervention, I express my highest regard for you, Mr Secretary General.

From the Vatican, 4 March 1997.

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