

Conclusions from the Assembly of Bishops

At the close of the plenary session held from 28th January to the 1st February, the bishops of Colombia made the following statement.

LXXXIV PLENARY SESSION

We would like to set out our position and commitments with regard to the latest events that have troubled the country.

1. As expressed by the President of the Episcopal Conference in the opening speech of the assembly, “the Catholic Church, with autonomy and independence, has been and always will be open to promoting, facilitating and supporting all the processes that lead to the construction of a reconciled Colombia at peace and with social justice”.
2. This decision is driven by our faith and commitment as believers: in the value of life, respect for human dignity, the gospel demands of forgiveness and reconciliation, respect for human rights and, above all the charity that drives us to act for the benefit of our brothers and sisters who suffer.
3. The situation of the hostages causes us particular pain. Beyond being unjustly deprived of their liberty, they are subjected to inhuman treatment and living conditions that are at odds with the most basic of human rights.

Consequently, the Church unites with the calls of the Colombian people and the international community in demanding the liberation of all hostages.

4. We call on the FARC to respond to the outcry of the Colombian people and of the world and to accept our proposal of dialogue, in order to arrange a meeting place that permits the government and delegates of the FARC to agree on the terms by which the hostages can be liberated.
5. The worsening in relations with our neighbor Venezuela is concerning to us. We are two brother peoples, with a common history, with economic, social and cultural ties and with people who live and work in each other’s country.

We therefore ask that diplomatic relations be restored and that good relations be reestablished based on mutual respect and non-interference in the internal matters of the other country.

6. We take vows in order that our country can, one day, enjoy the happiness of peace, and we redouble our prayers that God may bless us, watch over us and help us to discover the roads that lead our people to lasting, stable peace and social justice.

We call on the protection of the Virgin Mary, the symbol of hope, to whom we entrust the fruit of this assembly, dedicating it to a reflection on the role of women in society and in the Church.

+ Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga
Archbishop of Tunja
President of the Bogota Episcopal Conference, D.C.,

1st February 2008