# KENYA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

## KENYA CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT

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Our Ref:

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***PRESS RELEASE***

***THE STATE OF THE NATION***

***"A CALL FOR A JUST, PEACEFUL AND UNITED KENYA"***

***"He has shown you, O mortal man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).***

### *Introduction*

Dear fellow Kenyans, we, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, gathered here at John Cardinal Njue Pastoral Centre in Embu, express our gratitude to the Almighty God for the blessings he has unceasingly given us, as Kenyans. We continue to thank Him for the peace in the country in spite of challenges, for the resilience of our people in their daily endeavors, and the emerging spirit of nationhood among Kenyans, especially the young people.

The Church has a role in providing direction and counsel to society and the State on social matters. "When the dignity of our brothers and sisters is violated, when politics fails to address the tragedies of humanity, when the economy turns against the person or science oversteps the limits of its competence, the Church, together with other Christian denominations and believers of other religions, must make her voice heard, not in order to dominate, but to promote communion." (Pope Léo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 27)

Guided by the Gospel, we call for responsible leadership, peaceful participation, respect for human rights and protection of the most vulnerable, as Jesus teaches, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"* (Matt. 5:9).

We have reiterated on many occasions that we must reject the culture of goons and all forms of political violence and threats to life. We now offer the following reflections and pastoral appeals for the good of our nation.



INCORPORATING: THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE
1. Commission for Doctrine, 2.Commission for Liturgy, 3.Commission for Missions, 4. Commission for Pastoral and Lay Apostolate (Family Life National Office)
5. Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism (CIRDE), 6. Seminary Episcop Commission (SEC), 7. Commission for Clergy and Religious (Liaison Committee),
8. Commission for Education and Religious Education (CERE), 9. Commission for Promoting Intergral Human Development-CPIHD (Catholic Justice and Peace Department.

## 1. To Our Young People

Following the decision and encouragement of the AMECEA Plenary assembly that reflected on the space of the young people in the Church and in society, we especially urge young people to grow to be active, responsible, and fulfilled citizens proud of their country.

We, your shepherds, are proud of your concern for the Nation. We encourage and support your energy, creativity, and interest in participating in civic duty. As we head to next year's General elections, we ask you to first make all efforts to get an identification card (ID), then register to vote so that you can elect the leaders of your choice. In addition, we remind you to remain steadfast in maintaining peace throughout the campaign period. Some politicians will lure you with enticements to be involved in political malpractices and cause violence. You have a life to live, moreover, in dignity. No one should use it for acts of lawlessness. In 1 Timothy 4:12, St Paul encourages you that *"let no one despise your youth; but be an example to those who believe, in word, in your way of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity."* We are all brothers and sisters, children of God, our creator. Resist the lure of money to cause violence. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ for the lure of money. Let not "apparent good" blind you to engage in violent activities. Instead, during the time of campaigns, use your creativity and social-media skills to protect your brothers and sisters, ensuring that justice and peace are the shield for everyone around you.

## 2. Civility in Political Discourse

Political campaigns are sometimes characterized by personal attacks. However, as Scripture warns us in Ephesians 4:29, *"Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give grace to those who hear."* We urge all political aspirants and their supporters to be conscious of their utterances in public spaces. Charged campaigns should not be a pretext to use polarizing language. We also remind the political actors that the stipulated campaign period has not begun. Kenyans expect people seeking office and their supporters, to be civilized in their language, attitudes, and behavior. The use of indecent and offensive language by political aspirants and their supporters, undermines the morals that we teach our children. It sets bad examples for younger generations. In addition, the use of uncivilized language sets the ground for hate speech. We must not forget that the relative peace we enjoy can be lost through careless words. It is in our interest to ensure that peace is sustained through the campaign period. We therefore ask leaders involved in campaigns to be mindful of their language in public discourse. We invite all aspirants and especially the Presidential candidates, to make a public commitment to keep peace and maintain political decency.

### 3. Our Responsibility to Elect Credible Leaders

We have from time to time come to you, dear Kenyans, and in a special way, our leaders, to raise our concerns on issues affecting all of us, with the hope that we can together pick them up, address them, and find solutions. Once more, we now raise some issues we ought to address, especially as we prepare for the 2027 General elections.

We have before us a moment to reflect and evaluate the performance of the leaders we have and to vote wisely. This is a great opportunity to exercise our individual and collective right to elect leaders we expect to deliver on their mandates. This opportunity before us, must therefore, not go to waste. We have to discern from the political campaigns style and what they offer, the genuine candidates we should vote for. The noise that pollutes the air during the campaigns must not block our individual discernment on who is best suited to represent and lead us. We have a responsibility as voters to reflect in the quiet of our hearts, in order to vote responsibly. We therefore encourage all to listen to the campaign messages targeted at us carefully, discern the sincerity of those delivering them, and then make the right choices.

### 4. Respect for Places of Worship

Dear Kenyans, we must remind ourselves that places of worship deserve the greatest reverence we can offer. We read in Habakkuk 2:20, *"But Yahweh is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him!"* Electioneering does not make it exceptional to turn places of worship into political platforms.

People from all backgrounds come to places of worship to find inner peace. People from opposing political parties come to places of worship not as parties but as worshippers. We do not make distinctions on the status of worshippers. Everyone is welcome to a place of worship. However, we have incidents where politicians attempt to use the places of worship as campaign platforms. As your shepherds, we emphasize that the pastoral agents in charge, particularly priests, have a pastoral obligation to protect sacred places from being used for political campaigns. Places of worship should be peacefully and prayerfully available to everyone, regardless of their political affiliation, and be symbols of unity, love, and care. Politicians have many options to utilize in their search for votes, including the media, barazas, and roadside rallies. We are therefore reiterating and directing that there shall not be any political address given in any of our Catholic Churches, in any part of the country. We are therefore instructing all our priests to implement this position of the Bishops' Conference, with diligence and the seriousness it deserves.

## 5. Electoral preparedness and the independence of the IEBC

Fellow Kenyans and our international partners, for next year's General elections, we, the Catholic Bishops, call for a well-coordinated, deliberate effort to ensure fair, credible, and transparent electoral process. For this to happen, the IEBC must work to raise public trust. We therefore make a clarion call to the IEBC that their primary mandate is to deliver free, fair and credible elections.

Electoral process mistakes were made in the past where campaigns led to vicious disputes, and sadly, the loss of lives and destruction of property. These mistakes should not be repeated next year. We ask that the IEBC implement clear mechanisms for voter registration, logistics, training, conduct of election officials, protection and verification of results, management of party agents, rapid resolution of electoral process complaints, and public communication at every stage of the process. Moreover, we urge all stakeholders to abide fully by the laid down IEBC guidelines. The IEBC should remain independent and resist every attempt by politicians or other powerful interests to intimidate, manipulate, or compromise its work. Kenya needs an election whose legitimacy is secured not only by the final declaration but also by the confidence the voters have in the electoral process. It is by taking these steps that public trust in IEBC will grow and ensure election results receive broad acceptance from the voters.

We also call upon the Judiciary to dispense justice, including those on electoral process, with diligence and impartiality.

## 6. Freedom of Speech, Media Freedom and Protection of Human Rights Defenders

We are concerned that the freedom of speech in our country is being tested on all fronts, and frequently contravened especially as we head to the 2027 General elections. Civil society have the right to raise issues of national importance, as provided in the Constitution. The media also has the privileges and obligations of exercising freedom to practice. In addition, we know that human rights defenders have the right to express their concerns. However, we sadly note that incidents of abductions, enforced disappearances, and harassment continue. What is of more concern is that some of these incidents are carried out by armed people in collaboration with the police. In other cases, the police watch as goons harass legitimate actors exercising their right to freedom of expression. We, the Catholic Bishops, condemn violations of freedom of expression and association. Let people enjoy their freedoms as a necessary part of building a vibrant democratic Kenya. In the same breath, we call on responsibility in the use of this freedom, especially in avoiding using inciteful, spiteful, tribal, hateful or demeaning statements. We call upon the security organs to be non-partisan in applying the law, without favouring any candidates or political affiliations.

### 7. Parliamentary Bills

We want to give a strong caution that any Bill being brought before Parliament must be genuinely motivated for the common good. The Bills that will strengthen the Electoral Act should be fast-tracked. However, in equal measure, we are concerned about introductions of Bills, such as the banning of livestreaming presidential vote tally, raise unnecessary tensions in the country. At this late hour, we should not introduce Bills that cast doubt on the credibility of the process into the general elections. If we do so, we risk discrediting the very process that is meant to deliver elected leaders we will entrust with the leadership of this country. We therefore ask the Speakers of Parliament to be patriotic by ensuring no divisive Bills are brought to the House. Instead, Parliament should ensure that peace and stability in Kenya is protected before, during and after the elections. Parliament has yet one more chance to redeem itself, by totally rejecting such an attempt to muzzle free access to information. There should be full transparency in the elections where Kenyans have access to all information.

We, the Catholic Bishops in Kenya, also wish to address you on our pastoral responsibility for the dignity and future of every learner. Education is a shared duty of parents, communities, religious bodies and the State, and must form the whole person for the common good. We acknowledge the Government's responsibility to reform education and the work undertaken through the Presidential Working Party on Education Reform and stakeholder validation. However, the six Education Bills before the National Assembly contain provisions that depart from the consultative process and would weaken the institutions that have long served the country. We have made submissions to this effect.

## Conclusion

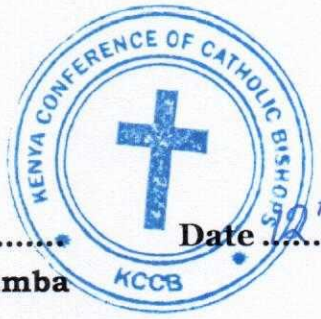
We thank all Kenyans who have remained steadfast in building peace and promoting justice in critical times. In particular, we thank the clergy, religious men, and women, civil society and many other Religious leaders for their commendable and silent prophetic work and all the pastoral ministries they administer every day.

We are coming to the festive season, and we wish to appeal to all Kenyans to observe discipline, road safety, avoid intoxication and careless driving, in order to reduce the road carnage we have recently experienced.

We call upon all Kenyans to place the dignity of every human person, peace, justice, truth, and the common good above ethnic, political, or personal interests. Our Nation has painfully learnt lessons from violence, division, corruption, and exclusion. Let us therefore choose a different path, one of dialogue rather than confrontation, service rather than self-interest, accountability rather than impunity, and solidarity rather than division.

May God guide our leaders, protect our people, strengthen our institutions, and grant Kenya the grace, wisdom, and courage to build a just, peaceful, and united nation for present and future generations. We wish all Kenyans and the entire Nation a merry Christmas and a Happy new year.

Signed by:




+ Muhatia ..... Date 12th November 2024

**Most Rev. Maurice Muhatia Makumba**
**CHAIRMAN**
**KENYA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

**PRESENT**

| | NAME | DIOCESE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Most Rev. Anthony Muheria | - Vice - Chairman of KCCB/Nyeri |
| 2. | Most Rev. Martin Kivuva Musonde | - Mombasa |
| 3. | Most Rev. Philip Anyolo | - Nairobi |
| 4. | Most Rev. Dominic Kimengich | - Coadj. Mombasa |
| 5. | Rt. Rev. Joseph Mairura Okemwa | - Kisii |
| 6. | Rt. Rev. Alfred Rotich | - Kericho |
| 7. | Rt. Rev. Norman King'oo Wambua | - Machakos |
| 8. | Rt. Rev. Peter Kihara | - Marsabit |
| 9. | Rt. Rev. David Kamau Ng'ang'a | - Aux. Nairobi |
| 10. | Rt. Rev. James Maria Wainaina | - Murang'a |
| 11. | Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa | - Ngong |
| 12. | Rt. Rev. Joseph Mbatia | - Nyahururu |
| 13. | Rt. Rev. Joseph Obanyi Sagwe | - Kakamega<br>- Apostolic Admin. Eldoret |
| 14 | Rt. Rev. Joseph Mwongela | - Coadj. Machakos |
| 15. | Rt. Rev. Michael Odiwa | - Homa Bay |
| 16. | Rt. Rev. Willybard Lagho | - Malindi |
| 17. | Rt. Rev. Mark Kadima | - Bungoma |
| 18. | Rt. Rev. George Muthaka | - Garissa |

19. Rt. Rev. John Mbinda - Lodwar
20. Rt. Rev. Hieronymus E. Joya - Maralal
21. Rt. Rev. Henry Juma Odonya - Kitale
22. Rt. Rev. Cleophas Oseso - Nakuru
23. Rt. Rev. Simon Peter Kamomoe - Wote
24. Rt. Rev. Wallace Ng'ang'a - Military Ordinariate
25. Rt. Rev. John Lelei - Kapsabet
26. Rt. Rev. Peter Makau Munguti - Isiolo
27. Rt. Rev. Peter Kimani - Embu
28. Rt. Rv. Jackson Murugara - Meru
29. Rt. Rev. Vincent Ouma Odundo - Aux. Kisumu
30. Rt. Rev. Obed Karobia - Aux. Nairobi
31. Rt. Rev. John Mwandi Mbua - Kitui