News



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The president of the Catholic bishops' conference of the war-torn countries of Sudan and South Sudan has written an open letter to his counterpart in Kenya, offering solidarity as that country is suffering outbreaks of violence amid voting in a re-run presidential election Oct. 26.

"We join our voice to yours to call on all Kenyans to chose life over death, peace over violence," Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala, head of the diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan, writes to Bishop Philip Anyolo, head of the diocese of Homa Bay in Kenya.

"We join you our fellow Bishops of Kenya in raising our voice on behalf of [a] peaceful and credible election, dialogue, genuine compromise, reconciliation, [and] healing and peace," states Kussala.

Kenyans are voting Oct. 26 in a re-run of an August presidential election, after the country's supreme court determined the first election had not been conducted in accordance with the Kenyan constitution.

President Uhuru Kenyatta was declared the winner in the August vote. His main rival Raila Odinga has pulled out of the re-run race, alleging it is being organized too hastily to be conducted fairly.

The election turmoil in the country has sparked demonstrations in areas where people widely back Odinga, and some 70 people have been killed in clashes with police since August.

In his Oct. 20 letter, Kussala from South Sudan tells Anyolo in Kenya about how the ongoing civil war in his country has affected its people.

"The truth of the matter for South Sudan including the Sudan is that, conflict has taken its toll on the local population," writes the Sudanese bishop. "This protracted violence has produced no winners. Only losers. The losers being the innocent people languishing in dark camps, bushes, open air settlements."

"As Kenyans you are a people of one country; never dare to lose this great God-given opportunity of [a] well grown nation, to now build a vision of peace through mutual dialogue for the whole of Kenya," Kussala tells Anyolo. "If you doubt what I am saying to you, please visit South Sudan, you will see outright how much we have lost in just four to five years to violence, it is terrible."

In their own statement Sept. 6, the Kenyan bishops' conference called on people in the country to "uphold the independence, dignity and integrity of the Supreme Court and Constitutional institutions even when we do not agree with their decisions."

"The Catholic Church will continue to stand for the strengthening of institutions, dialogue and mediation and peace-building to ensure that Kenya holds a free, fair and credible election as ordered by the Supreme Court," said the bishops.

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