

An extract from the statement on VIETNAM adopted by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches

As members of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in session at Geneva, Switzerland, we express our deep concern over the tragedy of Vietnam, a concern which has been voiced by many member churches and affiliated councils all over the world. We realise the longing of mankind for peace, not only in South-East Asia, but in the whole world. We are a part of all humanity in this. Here, however, as representatives of Christian Churches, we believe we have even deeper reason to speak and act for peace. We believe we must seek peace because of the gospel brought and proclaimed by our Lord. As representatives of a world wide community of faith, we remember that we are blessed as the children of God as we are makers of peace. We pray for peace.

We join with all men of good will in remembering: the suffering of a people which has already suffered too long, the diversion of human resources from constructive ends, the danger of escalation into world conflict, the recognition that there does not exist an international community under the rule of law nor sufficient understanding to achieve it. These unhappy realities add force to the Christian imperative. Furthermore, in this nuclear space age, the desire for justice must take into account the risk of catastrophic conflict. Yet we cannot forget that peace is the fruit of righteousness and becomes both durable and enduring only to the extent that it is built upon justice and freedom. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

To be silent at this time would be irresponsible.

In order to keep human suffering to a minimum and to contribute to a climate more conducive to negotiation, we set forth the following measures which we believe should be undertaken as promptly as possible:

1. That the United States and South Vietnam stop the bombing of the North and North Vietnam stop military infiltration of the South.
2. That the United States now announces its commitment to a withdrawal of its troops phased in accordance with provisions for peace-keeping machinery under international auspices and deemed adequate in the judgment of an international authority.
3. That all parties recognise the necessity of according a place in

negotiations both to the government of South Vietnam and to the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong), in proportions to be determined, and that arrangements be encouraged for negotiation between the government of South Vietnam and the National Liberation Front in the hope that there may be found a negotiating authority representative of all South Vietnam.

4. That North and South Vietnam develop greater flexibility in the initiation of and response to negotiation proposals.

5. That all parties give every possible protection to non-combatants and relieve the plight of those suffering from the fighting.

6. That all parties recognise the extent to which what is happening is part of a social revolution and that, freed from foreign intervention, Vietnam, both North and South, ought to be in a position to determine its own future, with due consideration of the demands of peace and security in South-East Asia.

7. That all parties recognise the futility of military action for the solution of the underlying political, social, and economic problems of Vietnam and the necessity of massive and generous development programmes.

8. That in order to relieve present international tension, the United States review and modify its policy of "containment" of communism, and communist countries supporting "wars of liberation" review and modify their policy.

9. That every effort be made to bring the 700 million people of China through the government in power, the People's Republic of China, into the world community of nations in order that they may assume their reasonable responsibility and avail themselves of legitimate opportunity—to provide an essential ingredient for peace and security, not only in South-East Asia, but throughout the entire world.

10. That another cease-fire be mutually and promptly agreed upon, of sufficient duration to serve as a cooling off period and as an opportunity for testing possibilities of negotiation—with a considerably enlarged unit of the International Control Commission (India, Canada, and Poland) to ensure that cease-fire commitments are honoured.

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