

**Joint declaration
of the Council of Christian Churches and the Inter-religious Council in Suriname
on the responsibility of the local religious organizations
in the care for peace and harmony in the Surinamese society
in response to the December 8 killings
and the ensuing judicial process**

The Council of Christian Churches (CCK) and the Inter-religious Council in Suriname (IRIS), in a joint meeting on Monday, 3 July 2017

considering:

- that the summary execution of fifteen Surinamese citizens on December 8, 1982, has resulted in the Surinamese society being held captive in a grip of fear, unrest, uncertainty and unease for almost 35 years to date;
- that the ensuing trial, which started on November 30, 2007, additionally gave rise to continually increasing division in and fragmentation of the Surinamese society;
- that the aforementioned affairs form a serious obstacle to earnest unity, development and welfare of the Surinamese people;
- that the religious organizations associated with the CCK and the IRIS are fully aware of their responsibility to contribute to the spiritual, moral and civil welfare of the whole of the Surinamese society, and also convinced of their vocation to be committed to the protection and integrity of all that we have been given by the Creator, especially human life;
- that the relatives of those who were executed on December 8, 1982, have the right to an unhindered judicial investigation and trial in the events, and subsequent redress;
- that the suspects in the trial that is already underway, have the right to a fair trial;
- that the unhindered continuation and completion of the trial regarding the executions of December 8, 1982, which has already started, is an essential prerequisite for safeguarding and maintaining the constitutional state;
- that Most Rev. Karel Choennie, Bishop of Paramaribo, has taken the initiative to conduct a wide consultation with various persons and institutions in society, aimed at creating conditions to guarantee peace and harmony in the Surinamese society, regardless of the outcome of the trial;

hereby declare the following:

- that the religious organizations associated with the CCK and the IRIS are prepared to do all that is in their capacity to keep and promote the peace, tranquility and harmony in the Surinamese society, and therefore pledge their support and collaboration to the initiative taken by Bishop Choennie.

Consequently the following urgent recommendations are given:

1. that all, especially those in authority, acknowledge and affirm that the already proceeding trial be continued and completed unhindered, and therefore refrain from applying any legal measure, whether or not constitutionally or morally permissible, intended to disrupt or delay the process or cause it to be prematurely terminated;
2. that subsequent to this trial an independent and impartial truth and reconciliation commission be established, and with the help of both national and international impartial expertise will focus on:
 - a. officially recording the truth for the history of our nation;
 - b. granting reparation/redress to the next of kin of the victims of the summary executions of December 8, 1982;
 - c. starting up a process of national reconciliation, whereby all other similar human rights violations, which occurred both before and after December 8, 1982, will receive the necessary attention and be dealt with accordingly;
 - d. creating sufficient societal support for the acceptance of subsequent measures proposed by the commission, for the sake of safeguarding peace and harmony in the local society;
3. that all parties, either directly or indirectly involved in the process of the trial, with due regard to law and justice, by acknowledging and accepting the definitive judicial verdict, and for the sake of the welfare of society, will collaborate to the closure of this painful chapter in our history, so that we as a society can return to the order of the day.

Signed,
Paramaribo, 03 juli 2017,

K. Choennie
CCK/IRIS/Bisdóm Paramaribo

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CCK/Evangelische Broedergemeente Suriname

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