



Bentiu, 5th April 2025

“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more” (Mt 2:18).

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Over the past week we have been shocked by the events in Abiemnhom. It seems that a contention over cows brought a terrible escalation of violence against the innocent population of Abiemnhom. This violence is neither understandable nor acceptable.

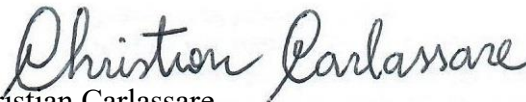
Reports say that tens of people have been left dead (about 37), several more people injured, and much of the population of Abiemnhom displaced in Ajakuac, in the nearby Twic County. The parish priest of Our Lady Help of Christians had to abandon the parish together with the Christians. They are now in Agook, about 1,000 people. They have lost most of their properties and have nothing to eat even though the local population is helping them in emergency.

I invite all the Catholic faithful of our diocese to pray even more intensely for peace as we are all wounded by this act of violence and we feel the pain of our brothers and sisters in Abiemnhom. Therefore, I ask our parishes to make a special collection during this fifth Sunday of Lent to send help to our Christians displaced in Agook. We want to show true solidarity to our brethren. Each parish priest is in charge to collect this heartfelt gift and send it to Fr. Bulus Reth in Agook.

I invite those in authority in Unity State and in Ruweng Administrative Area, especially in Mayom County and in Abiemnhom County to collaborate and restore dialogue to overcome this crisis together. Violence can never be justified. It is never useful to blame others for any misdeed, but it is better to find out the root causes of a conflict. The responsibility of those in authority is actually of listening to their community and to make a bridge with the neighbouring community to find understanding and common ground to solve the arising issues. We cannot allow some elements of our communities to rob us of the peace and security we need. At the same time, I invite those people who have selfish interests to stop inciting local communities to violence. This is why I advocate for a comprehensive disarmament. It is actually when we are weak that we are strong, because we become concerned for the well-being of our neighbours as much as we are for our own well-being.

I repeat: no violence is legitimate. Therefore, I quote what a holy Brazilian bishop taught: *the only legitimate war is the one declared against poverty and ignorance* (dom Helder Camara). Let us not waste time with conflicts for power that uses poverty and ignorance as weapons. Let us disarm ourselves and face poverty and ignorance together so that they may end soon, and we can finally live in peace and prosper in the land we have inherited. Let us unite to the cry of Rachel and our mothers so that we may finally find the way to righteousness and reconciliation.

Omnes Unum in Christo,


+ Christian Carlassare

Bishop of Bentiu

