

10 March 2010

Human Rights Committee
United Nations



The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development

To the Members of the Human Rights Committee

Fifth Periodic report of New Zealand under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Caritas apologises that work pressures contributed to our not completing an NGO submission to contribute to the Committee's consideration. We endorse the following points raised in the submission of Peace Movement Aotearoa:

A. The constitutional and legal framework

- Caritas has concerns that the Bill of Rights assessment has not been a sufficiently robust process to satisfy Church and wider society concerns that legislation which limits human rights is able to be passed, such as in the cases of the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 and the recent Immigration Act.
- The Treaty of Waitangi is easily able to be disregarded by the government's decision-making processes.

E. Treatment of prisoners

- Caritas shares and endorses all the concerns raised in regard to the examples raised by Peace Movement Aotearoa about the treatment of prisoners.
- Last year the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference commented: *"Prison numbers are growing faster than we can build prisons to hold people, and shortage of cells is leading to unsatisfactory solutions such as double-bunking.... Those who minister on our behalf to people in prisons speak of a constant deterioration in prison conditions."* <http://www.catholic.org.nz/statements/0907prison.php>

I. UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

- Caritas shares the concern that New Zealand has not yet changed its position on the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, although it has indicated that it will consider doing so.
- On Human Rights Day 2008, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops commented: *New Zealand is one of four settler nations who voted against the adoption of the Declaration. Alongside the United States, Canada and Australia - countries with very similar colonial histories to our own - our representatives allowed domestic politics to override our country's usually principled stand on human rights issues... We call on the government to enhance our country's proud record of leadership in human rights by supporting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.* <http://www.catholic.org.nz/statements/0812indigenousrights.php>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Beech".

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