

ATTACKS ON BISHOP PAUL FRANCIS DUFFY, OMI OF MONGU DIOCESE

We, the members of the Catholic Missionary Oblates, Zambia Delegation constituted by the decree of our worldwide family in Rome under the Superior General, have received the threats on Bishop Paul Duffy, OMI with great apprehension. The threats on Bishop Duffy's life by the MMD Copperbelt information secretary Chiko Chibale as reported in "The Post" news paper of Wednesday, September 15, 2010, are most unfortunate and should not be tolerated in a modern day democracy.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right and people in a democracy have the right to express their opinion, it is in this context that we understood the press statement of our Bishop Duffy which has raised so much dust.

Recent attacks also from Ministers Dora Siliya, Ronnie Shikapwasha and Joseph Mulyata are unwarranted against a man who has spent most of his life in Zambia.

Who is Bishop Duffy? His Lordship Bishop Paul Francis Duffy, OMI, is a member of the Catholic Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Oblates) and the first Bishop of the Diocese of Mongu. He has served in Zambia as a priest since 1984 when the Oblates first came to Zambia from Texas, USA at the invitation of the Zambian Church. Subsequently, Bishop Duffy has served as Bishop since 1997.

Bishop Duffy understands the geography and cultural nuances of Zambia especially the Western Province, where he has served for 26 years without a single absence to his home country of origin the USA. He has worked with people from the grassroots in some of the most remote villages in the Western Province among them: Muyondoti, Kakulunda, Mataba and many places in Lukulu as well as places in Kalabo like Lueti, Liuwa, Sihole to mention but a few. Bishop Duffy has been a man for the people and with the people at all times. As such, we feel the Bishop has all the rights and freedom of expression as a resident of Zambia and as a religious leader. As a bishop in the Catholic Church, he plays a vital role in guiding God's people spiritually, socially, culturally and economically for the well being of the people in his territory to access national development.

Thanks to the presence of the Catholic Church in the Western Province a number of projects such as Education centers (e.g Mongu College of Education); Home Based Care (HIV/AIDS) programmes; orphanages; Vocational Centers and homes for the disabled are being successfully administered by the Diocese of Mongu. Others include agricultural Centres such as the Diocese of Mongu Development Center (DMDC) which buys most of the rice grown in the Western Province. All these point to how much passion Bishop Duffy has for his adopted home, the Western Province.

We therefore, appeal to the MMD leadership to halt attacks on Bishop Duffy and desist from threats against Bishop Duffy's life. As Oblates and Catholics we are aware that the

MMD encompasses some of our faithful Catholics who serve with diligence in the party. It is for this reason that all our Zambian Bishops insist that they are and will continue to be non-partisan. They are above party politics.

We call for civility, decency, humility and responsibility in all sectors of our society regardless of which party one belongs to. We also urge our Police Service to be professional and take threats seriously. Our wish is to see a violence-free society. It is possible to co-exist with different opinions. Our nation should be built on our forefather's vision, of ONE ZAMBIA, ONE NATION.

Fr. Freeborn Isaac Kibombwe, OMI

Oblates Vicar Superior /Acting Leader in Zambia