

**Statement on the current political tension in
Papua New Guinea
Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG/SI**

9 June 2016

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands views with concern the recent escalation of the political struggle currently taking place in Papua New Guinea.

Political disputes must be handled in the appropriate forum: parliament, guided by the Constitution. However every person in Papua New Guinea is obliged to follow the rule of law and the Melanesian Way, practicing restraint in times of conflict, avoiding escalation and the resort to violence. We therefore appeal to all parties to express their legitimate concerns, even anger, without recourse to violence. In particular we appeal to the disciplined forces to follow correct procedures and never to use armed violence against our own unarmed citizens.

It is time for cooler heads to prevail, and for all parties to come together, mediated by a neutral third party, to work together for a peaceful outcome that follows the civil and gospel principles of honesty, truth and justice.

We repeat our appeal for Parliament to genuinely address the growing curse of corruption in our country. There appears to be not only a lack of political will but even sometimes a deliberate avoidance of tackling the issue, which we believe lies behind much of the anger and unrest felt by students and the wider population.

Strengthen the Ombudsman Commission. Fast track the Independent Commission against Corruption. Depoliticize the public service and the disciplined forces.

The knife that cuts out corruption must cut cleanly and quickly.

By the Catholic Bishops of PNG