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Jayapura, 7 March 2003

To:
Mgr. Cesare Bonivento PIME
Bishop of Vanimo
P.O.Box 205
VANIMO - SP
PNG

Dear Bishop,

First of all I would like to thank you for the open letter you have addressed to the Right Honourable Sir Michael T. Somare GCMG CH, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. The letter is a moving and clear expression of your heart and your sincere will to serve humanity. We know about all the efforts you have gone through to help people who have fled Papua as they feared for their life. The commitment you have shown, which you are showing and which you are ready to show in the future is an inspiration for all of us who have been called to continue Jesus' mission in the world of today.

As you will remember, after our discussions way back in 2001, on 26th February 2001 we have sent a letter to the Governor of Papua concerning the future of the bordercrossers in PNG. In that letter we have made clear that we all will be happy when these Papuan people can return to their homeland. Nevertheless we have put forward as well that any form of repatriation has to be based on three main conditions:

(1) there is no compulsion or force used (2) it is not undertaken before the situation in Papua has returned to normal and (3) it must be monitored by an International body and the church.

We still keep strongly to these conditions, and we are very worried to read as quoted in your letter that "if the border-crossers refuse to go back on a voluntary basis police would be used to forcefully repatriate them" (Post Courier, 3rd March 2003). Such a policy is not acceptable for the very reasons you have explained so well in your letter to the Prime Minister.

Dear Bishop, please feel sure of our full support while committed to this human mission and we join in praying that by the help of the Lord honourable solutions may be found in full respect of both the Sovereignty of Papua New Guinea and those who fled to PNG in fear of their lives.

Yours fraternally,

+ Mgr. Leo L. Ladjar OFM
Bishop of Jayapura

cc.:
Prime Minister, PNG
Governor, Papua
Catholic Bishop Conference, PNG