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Police root for election time peace, harmony



Tanzania's Inspector General of Police Ernest Mangu presents a paper during a conference under the auspices of 'Maendeleo Dialogue' held recently in Dar es Salaam which brought together religious leaders, politicians and other stakeholders. He urged religious leaders that their spiritual canceling is much needed now than ever.

By Correspondent Getrude Mbago

PEACE is a very important aspect in life all over the world but never bought. Without peace nothing is possible.

You can earn everything which includes luxuries, accessories, comfort of all kinds and satisfaction to some extent, but one thing that we can never buy or earn is called 'Peace'. AS Tanzania is approaching General Election on October 25, this year, religious leaders, voters and all other stakeholders have been urged to maintain peace

and tranquility as there is life after elections.

It has been mentioned that religious leaders have got an immense role with great impact in maintaining peace especially this time.

In order to maintain the tempo, three institutions namely; the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), the Tanzania Centre for Democracy (TCD) and the Inter-Religious Council for Peace Tanzania (IRCPT), recently organised a conference under the auspices of 'Maendeleo Dialogue'.

The two-day conference held in Dar es Salaam brought together various stakeholders including religious leaders, politicians and members of the police force to discuss and

share views on how they are going to preserve peace in the General Election slated for next month.

Speaking on behalf of the three organising bodies, Erasto Ndeuka from KAS said the joint committee had seen the importance to put together serious minds of the key players, knowing that Tanzania should remain one even after elections," he commented.

The conference was meant to promote peaceful campaigns and election process, making reference to similar efforts previously done with the same intention.

During the conference it was stressed that religious leaders have got strong power

to help the nation uphold the prevailing peace during and after the General Election scheduled for October this year.

Following the high of elections tensions, Religious leaders were urged that their spiritual canceling is much needed now than ever in maintaining and safeguarding peace. Dr John Jingu from the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) said that the political situation as the country is approaching to elections faces many things which are quite different from the past scenarios.

The competition will be stiffer than it has ever happened before.

'Uncommon intensities in the political order' one is heightened participation of politics of the citizenry all discussions are centered on politics and even at cheap places of talk.

"We have observed that political activism for and against have increased to the extent that political rallies are well attended than the situation was previously. But also even between one party and another, particularly when there are dissertations and defections," he commented.

He said, in this year there is more political propaganda than discussions of issues. A lot of spinning even by those who do not say they are on which side, but even foreign interest has increased than ever before. Also there are polarisation politics, which in some extent they can cause extremism.

There are issues of identities based on tribalism, and ethnicity, also identifying with the downtrodden. These intensities are both negative and positive and they can cause the disintegration of the nation. So there is need to maintain the rules of the game. So he said the role of religious leaders now matters than any time ever, they have to talk to people on the importance of peace maintenance in the country.

For his part, IRCPT Executive Secretary Rev Thomas Godda said that as religious leaders they are eager to ensure that the country's peace is not ruined.

He said in attaining the goal they have arranged a series of dialogues in different regions countrywide so as to prepare people on how best to handle the General Election as they maintain peace.

"We are all aware that we have the obligations to ensure

that 'peace' which is our golden gift is never smashed and through our sermons we will achieve this," he assured.

For his part, United Nations Resident Coordinator Alvaro Rodriguez said peace preservation especially in this period is very important and the UN will enhance its support in ensuring that it is maintained. According to him, "peace is not everything but without peace everything is impossible, so everyone has to be aware of that."

"The UN has offered peace training to various police officers till now and the aim is to have 6,000 police officers countrywide," he explained.

He warned that election conflicts will endanger the nation's youth and long term future, women, children and girls will mostly be affected.

Nevertheless, he said, the primary role of preserving peace now rests with political parties and their leaders. "They will largely determine how their support and the general public will perceive the election environment and the results of the General Election.

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Speaking also at the dialogue the Inspector General of Police, Ernest Mangu warned security groups owned by political parties to stop interfering with obligations of the police, saying the groups will not be allowed to work on Election Day because they are not responsible for that task.

IGP Mangu said the police force was well placed to guard peace and arrest anyone

intending to destroy it.

He said due to prevailing election tension this year, an irregular behaviour has emerged among political parties which proclaim that they will prevail at voting centres to protect their votes, a thing which is against the law.

"As police, we will take stern measures even if it means dragging to court those who will dare to go against the law," he said.

According to him, the main role of the police during elections is to maintain public order and to create, by means of effective policing, a favourable climate in which a democratic election can take place. "We need to fulfill our obligations by safeguarding the lives and property of citizens during the campaigns and voting, ensure safety for candidates during campaigns as well as providing security for electoral officials and election materials at polling stations," he said.

In another score, he urged religious leaders to use their spiritual and convincing power to encourage and preach preservation of peace.

He told them that the religious leaders have a high capacity to make the people psychologically prepared for any results.

Recently President Jakaya Kikwete also sounded the reminding call in Dar es Salaam while marking the second anniversary on the investiture of Pope Francis' papacy - the ceremony held at Archbishop Padilla's residence in the city at the weekend.

According to him, he took power at the time when the country was well decorated with peace, security and tranquility and as his office

tenure ends, he is optimistic; his successor will also inherit the same.

"Every five years, Tanzanians vote in quest for citizenry consent to pick their head. Handover of power in Tanzania has been a matter of peace and we have remained a bright example in Africa to allow a peaceful handover."

Through this procedure, the president said: "I will end my tenure as a leader and delegate power to the new president. It is my great hope that you will work well with the new leader to maintain peace and social stability as we have partnered ... I believe that the Catholic Church will help to ensure that our electoral process and the handover of leadership are peaceful."

Lauding the Catholic Church for devoted cooperation with the government in providing social services in various developments including health sector,

President Kikwete he said the church and the government are institutions taken care of by humans, sometimes misunderstandings remains obvious. They happen and extinguish - but the relationship between the two is still stronger.

President Kikwete seized the opportunity to bid his farewell to the heads of the Catholic Church, stressing that he is leaving the country in peace and stability. He says the country is now experiencing economic and social transformation which has never been recorded in its history.

Adding: "I have devoted much of my time to develop and strengthen relations between the government and the Church."