



RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE RWANDA-BELGIUM "Rwanda Amateka Mashya" JULY 2009

**EVANGELISCHE
ALLIANTIE
VLAANDEREN**

Letter of the Belgian delegates addressed to the Rwandan representatives,

To all concerned,

July 2009

The **Evangelical Alliance Flanders (EAV)** declares that they want to lend their full moral support to the reconciliation process which takes place between Belgium and Rwanda. Reconciliation is a biblical task for all Christians in imitation of the reconciliation work of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:23-24). For *"...God was in Christ reconciling the World to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)*.

We acknowledge with great regret that during the period of the colonization by the Belgian government and by the Belgian people, much injustice has been done and much grief has been caused to the Rwandan people. The colonization itself, the authoritarian occupation of a country and the submission of the indigenous communities, driven by greed and imperialism, must be designated as an aggression infamous on a world scale. The disdain of the local civilization and culture, the disruption of the delicate existing power balances, the arbitrary deposing or removing of local kings and rulers, the crippling of the indigenous trade, the economic plunder, the heavy taxes, the forced labor and the cruelties involved..., we want to confess these as "national sins".

We confess as well that our churches and missionaries often did not bring the pure gospel, but a mixture of Christianity and European culture. Too often, they brought about relentless conversions and were too closely linked to the colonial oppressive regime. In the name of "Christianity", things were said and done which are opposite to the Spirit of Christ, who revealed Himself as a servant and gave His life for others.

We confess every feeling of superiority and racism as essentially unchristian, and we testify to our regret that this has dominated for decades. Consequentially, we sorrow over the disruption and destruction caused by it on the political, economic, ethnic, moral and psychological level.

We confess that Belgium created and reinforced disunity between the different races by creating pseudo-scientific theories and myths about the so-called superiority of races, by favoring one group at the expense of the other, and by embedding the differences by stamping it on identity cards, and by drumming it into the heads of the younger generations at schools. Thus, history has been falsified and the self-perception of the Rwandans has been deformed. One group has been set against the other and has in fact been used to oppress the other. Here, the foundations for the future genocide were already laid.

After the second World War, the Belgian government and the church began to steer an opposite course and, to weaken the people in their rightful struggle for independence, they set the other group against the first one. Thus, the "divide and rule" policy was turned around by creating

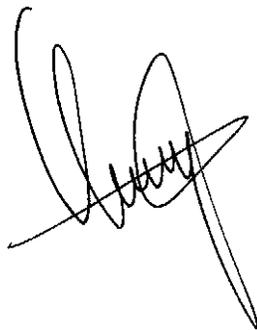
reversed myths and caricatures, and the massacres in 1959 were supported or tolerated by the Belgians and kept unpunished, according to the ethnical preference of that moment.

Also after the independence, the Belgian government lend support to one party at the expense of the other. In the build-up to the genocide of 1994, our country is also guilty of, together with the international community, ignoring clear signals, a hesitating attitude, a refusal to take a clear position by condemning violence publicly and by acknowledging it, in an early stage, as genocide. Furthermore, our country has at the highest point of the genocide, for fear of the own public opinion, abandoned you by withdrawing its national contribution in the peacekeeping force, while it was still capable of preventing the killing and thus saving many innocent lives. As if that was not enough, our country devoted itself internationally to withdraw the troops of other countries as well. Because of this, Belgium bears a responsibility as ex-colonizer in the terrible escalation of hatred and bloodshed during the genocide.

We acknowledge as well that, since the independence of Rwanda, many political and economical injustices persisted in the relations between our countries, which obstructed the sound development of your beautiful country. And that Rwandans in our country are not always received with hospitality and get equal chances to study or for jobs because of racism, still existing among our people. We want to break with these sinful practices, in our personal lives as well as in our environment, and we will work at a stronger awareness of this history in our country. We also want to resolve to do everything in our power in the future to realize new, sound relations of equal value and respectful cooperation. We believe Europe and Africa have much to offer to each other and can mutually enrich each other.

We pray and hope that this process of reconciliation may bring a beginning of restoration and that it may be healing for both countries. We need forgiveness from God and from each other to close this painful history so that the future can have a new chance. May God help us in the future to see His image in each other and to be a blessing to each other. For this purpose, we put our hope in Jesus Christ, *"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity..., so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity"* (Ephesians 2:14-16).

The administration of EAV,



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