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Tombouctou - MALI

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The Honourable Archbishop Desmond Tutu  
Cape Town

On the 23 of November, two Europeans were kidnapped in Hombori in the Northern Region of Mali; in Timbuktu, my hometown, a tourist was killed and three others kidnapped by an unidentified armed group two days later, on November 25.

I have not known peace in my life and yet I have only sought that peace. I was three years old when my country became independent, six years old when the Tuareg rebellion begun, nine years in the first year of the drought, twelve years in the year of the cholera outbreak, fifteen years during the year of the great drought; up to the age of thirty four I lived under military rule and since my thirty fourth year, I live between sporadic wars caused by the Tuareg rebellion and an uneasy peace. I am 54 years old and I do not sleep in peace. In the streets of my city people are killed, and people are kidnapped.

Those who kill are my brothers; those who die are my brothers. Every person is my brother, whatever their colour, regardless of their religions.

But alas, too many walls exist among people and few bridges unite them. That's why I founded in the 1990's the Fray Leopoldo Home in Timbuktu with the Franciscans of Spain, to help the victims of the war and also the mothers and children of the Tuareg. And that is also why I followed it by opening, in the 2000's, the Fondo Kati Private Library in Timbuktu, which has now 12,657 manuscripts. These manuscripts are of my family and among my ancestors, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, there are Muslims, Jews and Christians, and I wanted to make this library a bridge between cultures and peoples. The Fondo Kati is a bridge today, but we must build more of these, and the most durable bridge is that of our love and our prayers.

Those who kill are in as much need of our prayers as those who die at their hands. Those who kill need our forgiveness and compassion; they need our prayers and our love. Prayers and love are the only means we have to get them to love and show compassion. Prayer and love are our only ways to tell the world that every man has in him, as any other, human dignity and that no person should be kidnapped or killed because of his religion, his country of origin or the colour of his skin. To do so only harms human dignity.

Because of this, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, I want to organize in Timbuktu a Prayer for Peace, in the churches and mosques, and I want to organize this prayer throughout the towns of Mali and elsewhere, in synagogues, churches and mosques.

This is what leads me to ask you for a letter of support and prayer here in Cape Town for Peace in Timbuktu and the rest of the world. My wishes for peace,

Ismael Diadié Haidara

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