



Jubilee 2025:

CCJP PUBLIC STATEMENT ON JUSTICE, PEACE & THE FUTURE OF MALAWI

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Preamble: A Jubilee of Hope and Responsibility

As the Catholic Church worldwide marks the Jubilee Year 2025 – a sacred time of renewal, hope, and restoration – the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) of the Malawi Conference of the Catholic Bishops joins in reflection on our nation's journey. Jubilee, in biblical terms, envisions liberation, economic and environmental justice, and care for the vulnerable. It calls us to be “pilgrims of hope”, working so that **no one is left behind** in the blessings of creation. In this spirit, we celebrate the strides Malawi has made, while soberly recognizing the challenges that still hinder the flourishing of our people.

This Jubilee coincides with a pivotal moment in Malawi's democracy: the approach of the elections. These upcoming elections – scheduled for September 2025 – present an opportunity for renewal in our governance and a test of our nation's commitment to democratic ideals. The CCJP, as the social justice and advocacy arm of the Catholic Church, commends all Malawians for cherishing peace and constitutional order since our democratic transition. We recall with pride how our institutions, including the judiciary, upheld the integrity of elections in the historic 2019–2020 electoral case, setting a regional example of justice.

At the same time, our Jubilee reflection must confront the pressing socio-economic and political issues facing Malawi. In recent months, citizens from all walks of life have voiced concerns about the high cost of living, incidents of political violence, rampant corruption, mismanagement of natural resources, and questions about our electoral readiness. We have listened to these concerns. In the Jubilee spirit of truth and repentance, CCJP seeks to speak out on these challenges – not to assign blame, but to encourage urgent and constructive action by all responsible: government, political leaders, civil society, faith communities, and citizens alike. Only through honest acknowledgement of our problems can we find just and peaceful solutions. Below, we outline key issues and our appeals in each area.

Developments in Civic Life

To begin with we wish to recognize positive developments that inspire hope. Malawians have remained peaceful and united through difficult times, showing resilience and faith in dialogue over conflict. There is a growing public awareness and engagement in governance evidenced by vibrant media and civil society advocacy. We applaud the increased participation of women and youth in community decision-making and the commitment of many to uphold human rights and the rule of law. Notably, steps have been taken toward more inclusive elections: for example, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) reports significant registration of persons with disabilities (over 137,000 registered voters with various disabilities) to ensure their voices are heard. Such efforts toward inclusion, transparency, and accountability are rays of hope. They remind us that, as a nation, we can work together in the spirit of solidarity to improve our society.

Critical National Issues Requiring Action

Despite the positive trends, Malawi today faces several critical challenges that demand collective attention and action:

1. Soaring Cost of Living and Economic Hardships

Malawians are enduring a severe cost-of-living crisis. Basic necessities have become painfully expensive, stretching family budgets to the breaking point. Year-on-year out inflation remains extraordinarily high, hovering around 30% with food inflation even higher. Staple foods like maize have seen price hikes that are unprecedented. The Malawi Kwacha's sharp depreciation further fueled price increases. Additionally, utility costs are rising; for instance, electricity tariffs went up by ~16% at the start of this year.

These figures are not mere statistics – they represent children going to bed hungry, parents unable to provide for school fees, and households teetering on the edge of poverty. Over 60% of Malawians live on less than \$2.15 per day, a stark indicator of extreme poverty in our land. The Catholic social teaching principle of the “preferential option for the poor” impels us to speak on this reality: the poor and vulnerable are suffering acutely from economic mismanagement and external shocks. We acknowledge that global factors (such as fuel price trends and climate-related harvest failures) have played a role. Yet, we urge our government leaders to do much more to stabilize the economy and cushion the vulnerable.

Policies must be enacted (and implemented with integrity) to curb inflation, ensure affordable farm input availability, and create safety nets for low-income families. Transparency in economic management is crucial to restore trust; citizens have the right to know how resources like the national budget are being used to alleviate their hardships. We call on authorities to prioritize prudent fiscal decisions that reduce unnecessary expenditure and corruption leaks, so that resources can be directed to easing the people's burdens. Every Malawian deserves the dignity of a decent living standard. In this Jubilee year, let us remember the call of Leviticus to “proclaim liberty throughout the land” – which in today's terms includes economic liberty from the slavery of crippling poverty and manacle of hunger.

2. Political Intolerance, Violence and Threats to Peace

CCJP is deeply concerned by recent incidents of political violence and intolerance that threaten our peace. Malawi has long been known as the “Warm Heart of Africa” for our peaceable culture. We must not allow the heat of political rivalry to cool that warmth into hatred or fear. Sadly, as we head towards the elections we are witnessing troubling events: peaceful demonstrations have been met with violence and intimidation. For example, from November 2024, protesters in Lilongwe advocating for electoral reforms were attacked by masked thugs, and police reportedly stood by without adequate intervention. Similar events have been witnessed recently in Mzuzu. A similar incident later that month saw an anti-government protest over fuel shortages disrupted by armed assailants wielding machetes, with tear gas used and that security forces appeared to protect the aggressors instead of the victims. Such lawless and orchestrated attacks – whether by party cadres or any group – are an affront to democracy and human dignity.

We strongly condemn these acts of violence and intimidation. There is no place in a democratic Malawi for political thuggery, harassment of opponents, or suppression of dissenting voices.

As we head towards the elections, we urge all political leaders and supporters to please refrain from hate speech, incitement, and aggression. Competing ideas and vigorous debate are the hallmarks of democracy; intimidation and violence are its destruction. We appeal to the ruling party and opposition alike to remember that power is not a license to bully, but a responsibility to serve. We call upon the security agencies – the Malawi Police Service and others – to carry out their duties with professionalism and impartiality. Recent crackdowns and the reported “weaponisation” of law enforcement to silence critics are deeply worrying. Our constitution guarantees fundamental freedoms. The role of the police and military must be to uphold those freedoms and keep the peace, not to instill fear.

CCJP also notes with concern the reports of shrinking civic space – from pressures on journalists (such as incidents of reporters being detained) to the misuse of cyber laws against critical voices. We urge the government to review and refrain from any actions that unjustly limit free expression. A robust, free press and active citizen voice are not threats; they are essential to accountable governance. In this Jubilee time of reconciliation, let us reject the path of confrontation and violence. We appeal in the spirit of Christ’s teaching: “Blessed are the peacemakers”. Let us maintain Malawi’s peace through mutual respect, tolerance, and dialogue. Disagreements should be resolved through the ballot and the courtroom, not with fists or panga knives. We are one people; after elections, we still must live side by side as brothers and sisters. No political ambition is worth the blood of a single Malawian.

3. Endemic Corruption and Erosion of Good Governance

Corruption remains a cancer at the heart of Malawi’s social and economic woes. Despite promises of reform, citizens continue to see frequent reports of misappropriation of funds, bribes, nepotistic appointments, and abuse of power for personal gain. Malawi’s standing in international corruption indices reflects this worrying reality: in the latest Transparency International rankings, our country scored only 34/100, placing us among the most corruption-challenged nations globally. This score has stagnated, showing no improvement over the previous year – a clear sign that stronger action is needed.

We are particularly dismayed by apparent backsliding in high-profile anti-corruption cases. Recently, a major corruption trial involving allegations against top officials was abruptly abandoned, a move that has understandably shaken public confidence in our justice system. The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) – which should be spearheading the fight against graft – has been without a permanent Director General for an extended period after the contract of the previous respected Director expired in 2024. To date, a new Director has not been appointed, leaving a leadership vacuum at an institution so crucial for accountability. This delay is unacceptable; it sends the wrong signal about our commitment to rooting out corruption. We urge the authorities to expedite the appointment of a qualified, independent, and empowered ACB head, and to ensure the Bureau operates free from political interference or intimidation.

The culture of impunity must end. CCJP calls for all branches of government to reinforce the anti-corruption legal framework and to resource the investigative and prosecutorial agencies adequately. There should be no “sacred cows”: whether one is a cabinet minister, a business tycoon, or a public servant, anyone found to be involved in corruption must face justice without fear or favor.

We also appeal to Malawi’s international partners to continue assisting our anti-corruption drive through technical support and by enforcing against cross-border corruption networks (such as profiteers who bribe officials for contracts). The recent case in the United Kingdom exposes of alleged “state capture” by certain businessmen are alarming. Malawians deserve to know the truth and see wrongdoers punished and stolen public monies recovered.

Importantly, corruption is not only about grand scandals. It is also about the petty bribery and favoritism that ordinary people encounter daily in offices, checkpoints, and services. We urge every citizen to reflect on their role: let us reject the temptation to give or take bribes. We implore public officials to remember that service to the nation is sacred trust. As Scripture says, “You cannot serve both God and mammon.” Let us serve God and Malawi by being honest stewards. The Jubilee calls for repentance and restoration – those who have plundered public resources should examine their conscience, repent, and make amends. We ask the government and all players to enact the Whistleblowers Act for the protection of those who bring to light such cases.

4. Mismanagement of the Mining & Natural Resources Sector

Malawi is blessed with an abundance of natural resources – from minerals like uranium, rare earths, coal and many others, to our lands, forests, and waters. These gifts from God should be a source of national prosperity and community development. Instead, due to poor governance greed and outright abuse, our extractive industries have too often been a tale of lost opportunities and environmental harm, a stark contrast to the principles of *Laudato Si’*. CCJP is alarmed by ongoing abuse in the mining sector. As CCJP we are shocked of recurring reports of corruption in the granting of mining licenses and concessions, where a few elites collude with foreign companies to reap profits while local communities see little benefit.

We note that in some cases, mining operations have proceeded without adequate consultation and consent of local communities, or without proper environmental and social impact assessments. This has led to problems such as land displacement, unsafe living conditions, and environmental degradation. Such practices violate the affected people’s rights to development and a clean environment – rights enshrined in our Constitution and in Catholic teaching on the care of God’s creation. For example, communities around some mining sites like in Karonga have complained about water pollution and loss of arable land, while promised community development projects or compensations have not materialized. This is unjust. CCJP urges the government and relevant companies to review all major mining projects to ensure environmental safeguards are in place and that local populations are compensated and included in decision-making.

There must also be transparency: contracts and revenue from mining should be publicly disclosed. We support Malawi's participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and encourage full compliance with its standards to rebuild trust.

In line with late Pope Francis's appeal in *Laudato Si'*, we must remember that the earth is our common home – exploiting it unscrupulously and enriching a few at the expense of many is a sin crying out for justice. As a country, we should aim for sustainable development: yes, let us develop our mining sector, but let it be done ethically, transparently, and sustainably, contributing to national development and future generations' wellbeing. We recommend that a portion of mining revenues be invested in the communities of origin (through schools, hospitals, roads) and in a sovereign wealth fund for Malawi's future. Let Jubilee 2025 spark a new resolve to "restore the land" – to manage our natural resources with accountability and care for creation.

5. Electoral Preparedness & Democratic Participation

The right to vote freely and to have credible elections is a cornerstone of our peace and progress. With the 2025 general elections on the horizon, CCJP stresses the paramount importance of electoral preparedness. We recognize and commend the Malawi Electoral Commission for steps taken so far – for instance, the official launch of the 2025 election processes currently underway. We also acknowledge recent improvements in the legal framework, such as the adoption of the 50%+1 majority vote requirement for the presidency, which followed the 2020 court ruling. This has already shifted our politics towards more coalition-building and issue-based alliances. However, the law needs to further improve to catch up with these realities.

Voter apathy is still a serious concern. The National Statistics Office projected 10,957,490 eligible voters for the September 2025 elections, yet only about 7.16 million citizens (65%) have registered for the upcoming elections. This shortfall underscores growing disillusionment especially among young people who cite unfulfilled campaign pledges, limited socioeconomic progress, and a sense that their vote might not matter. We must prove them wrong – their vote does matter greatly. We call on all eligible Malawians: do not lose hope or withdraw from the political process. Your voice is crucial in shaping a better Malawi. Voting is not just a right; it is a moral duty for the common good. CCJP, together with other civil society and faith-based groups, is ramping up civic and voter education efforts to encourage turnout and informed voting. We urge community leaders, pastors, traditional chiefs, and educators to join hands in this mission of civic mobilization. Let's particularly reach out to the youth and first-time voters – the future of our nation – to inspire them to participate actively and peacefully.

On the institutional side, we appeal to the government and Parliament to ensure that MEC is fully funded and logistically supported in a timely manner. Any delays in disbursing election funds or procuring materials could jeopardize the process. We also caution against introducing any new voting technologies or systems (such as electronic voting) without broad consensus and adequate preparation. While innovation can improve efficiency, it must not be done hastily or without educating the public, as it could breed mistrust or technical glitches. The controversy and protests surrounding proposals for electronic voting underscore the sensitivity of this issue.

MEC should focus on what is feasible and trusted, enhancing transparency in vote tallying and results management. We encourage MEC to continue engaging all political parties and observers regularly to update them on preparations and address grievances promptly.

Security and fairness during the campaign period will be another determinant of credible elections. We call on all political parties to abide by the Code of Conduct for elections – to refrain from using state resources for campaigning, avoid character assassination, and instead debate policies and ideas. The enforcement bodies (like the Malawi Human Rights Commission, police, and courts) must act swiftly on any violations, such as political violence or intimidation, hate speech, or misuse of public media. A level playing field is essential. We are heartened by the commitment of institutions like the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and others in monitoring these aspects. CCJP itself, through our diocesan networks, will be observing and praying for peace throughout the campaign and voting.

Conclusion: A Call for Unity, Justice, & Responsible Citizenship

In conclusion, as we celebrate Jubilee 2025, CCJP calls upon every Malawian to reflect on our shared duty to build a just and peaceful nation. Jubilee is a time of renewal – a time to restore what has been broken, to forgive debts and wrongs, and to return to the path of righteousness. Likewise, Malawi stands in need of renewal on many fronts: economic, political, and social. But this renewal will only come about if we work together in unity and with a heart of genuine patriotism and faith.

Recommendations

To those in positions of authority – be it in government, opposition, or civil service – we plead: lead with integrity and compassion. Remember that true leadership is service. Listen to the cries of the poor struggling with living costs. Be moved to action by the youth yearning for opportunities, by the mothers who cannot feed their children, by the fathers who cannot find jobs, by the sick who cannot afford medicine. Place the welfare of the people above partisan or personal interests. In the words of late Pope Francis, “politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.” Seek the common good; let that be your legacy.

To all political parties and actors – the election ahead should not divide us as enemies, but unite us in common purpose – that of advancing Malawi. After the votes are counted, we must all accept the outcome with grace and work with those elected, or provide constructive opposition, for the sake of national progress. Reject violence unequivocally. Embrace issue-based campaigns and maintain peace, so that Malawi’s democracy matures.

To our religious and traditional leaders – continue to be beacons of hope and moral guidance. Our nation greatly benefits from your wisdom and the trust you hold among communities. Raise your voices against injustice, nurture peace and reconciliation where there is conflict, and remind us of our higher values when materialism and hatred threaten to overtake. CCJP and the broader Church commit to doing the same, inspired by Christ’s mission to “bring good news to the poor... to proclaim liberty to captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed”.

To every citizen of Malawi: our country is our collective home. Each of us has a role in its healing and progress. Let us practice responsible citizenship – stay informed, participate constructively in civic life, hold leaders accountable but also be willing to contribute our time and talents to community development. Small acts of honesty and neighborly love in daily life, taken together, have the power to transform society. Let us rise above tribalism, regionalism and petty differences; we are one people under God. Unity does not mean uniformity of opinion, but it does mean respecting each other's dignity and resolving differences peacefully. As St. Paul teaches, "Let all that you do be done in love." In that spirit, even as we critique what is wrong, let us not do so with bitterness but with a genuine desire for correction and improvement.

May God bless Malawi, and bless us all as we strive for justice & peace.

SIGNED:

CCJP National Office
CCJP Blantyre Archdiocese
CCJP Lilongwe Archdiocese
CCJP Chikwawa Diocese
CCJP Dedza Diocese
CCJP Karonga Diocese
CCJP Mangochi Diocese
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