



Leaders of the Congregations and Provinces of the Sisters of St Joseph, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

8 December 2008

Hon John Key PM
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

HUMAN RIGHTS ANNIVERSARY CALLS US TO BE CONSISTENT

Dear Hon John Key PM,

The Leaders of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Congregations of the Sisters of St Joseph call on you, Prime Minister, Honourable John Key, to use the occasion of this week's 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights to announce that Aotearoa/New Zealand will ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Sixty years ago the nations of the world joined together in recognising that all people, in all nations, are free and equal regardless of race, religion, economic status, age or gender, and they brought into being the first international document recognising that human rights are the foundation of peace, justice and freedom in the world.

It is important to remember that New Zealand was very involved in developing the concept of the Declaration, and was one of the eight nations involved in its drafting. We have remained a key supporter of human rights in subsequent international treaty negotiations and have ratified almost all the major international human rights instruments. The one significant exception has been our refusal in the General Assembly last year to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures. It promotes equality and non-discrimination, and recognises the right of Indigenous people to self-determination. The Declaration is based on the principles of partnership, consultation and co-operation between Indigenous peoples and States. It does not create new rights, it elaborates on already existing human rights, principles and norms embedded in earlier human rights documents and applies them to Indigenous people.

The 60th anniversary of Universal Declaration on Human Rights provides an opportunity to assess the application of human rights around the world. Post War New Zealand governments have done good work – wonderful work – over many years championing human rights issues. Our non-acceptance of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People stands in stark contrast. We are asking that the government act quickly to remove this aberration and keep our human rights record intact.

Yours sincerely,

Noelene Landrigan rsj and Colleen Keeble rsj