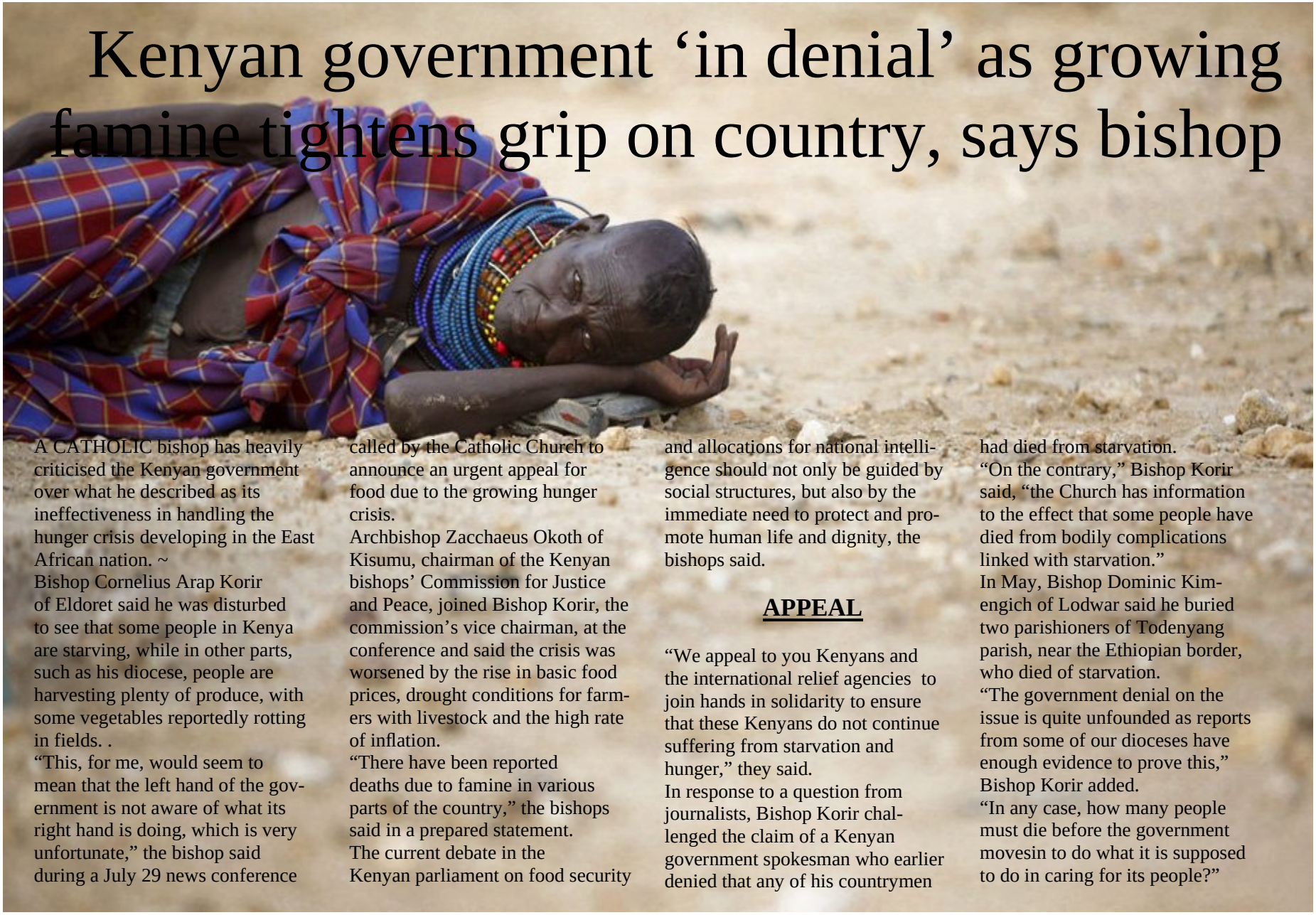
Kenyan government ‘in denial’ as growing famine tightens grip on country, says bishop



A CATHOLIC bishop has heavily criticised the Kenyan government over what he described as its ineffectiveness in handling the hunger crisis developing in the East African nation. ~

Bishop Cornelius Arap Korir of Eldoret said he was disturbed to see that some people in Kenya are starving, while in other parts, such as his diocese, people are harvesting plenty of produce, with some vegetables reportedly rotting in fields. .

“This, for me, would seem to mean that the left hand of the government is not aware of what its right hand is doing, which is very unfortunate,” the bishop said during a July 29 news conference called by the Catholic Church to announce an urgent appeal for food due to the growing hunger crisis.

Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth of Kisumu, chairman of the Kenyan bishops’ Commission for Justice and Peace, joined Bishop Korir, the commission’s vice chairman, at the conference and said the crisis was worsened by the rise in basic food prices, drought conditions for farmers with livestock and the high rate of inflation.

“There have been reported deaths due to famine in various parts of the country,” the bishops said in a prepared statement.

The current debate in the Kenyan parliament on food security and allocations for national intelligence should not only be guided by social structures, but also by the immediate need to protect and promote human life and dignity, the bishops said.

APPEAL

“We appeal to you Kenyans and the international relief agencies to join hands in solidarity to ensure that these Kenyans do not continue suffering from starvation and hunger,” they said.

In response to a question from journalists, Bishop Korir challenged the claim of a Kenyan government spokesman who earlier denied that any of his countrymen had died from starvation.

“On the contrary,” Bishop Korir said, “the Church has information to the effect that some people have died from bodily complications linked with starvation.”

In May, Bishop Dominic Kimengich of Lodwar said he buried two parishioners of Todenyang parish, near the Ethiopian border, who died of starvation.

“The government denial on the issue is quite unfounded as reports from some of our dioceses have enough evidence to prove this,” Bishop Korir added.

“In any case, how many people must die before the government movesin to do what it is supposed to do in caring for its people?”

Text: The Universe Sunday, 7 augustus 2011