

HEADS OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN ZIMBABWE



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CONCERN OVER THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE: MESSAGE FROM THE HEADS OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

As the shepherds of the people, we, Church leaders of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), express our deep concern over the deteriorating political, security, economic and human rights situation in Zimbabwe following the March 29, 2008 national elections.

Before the elections, we issued statements urging Zimbabweans to conduct themselves peacefully and with tolerance towards those who held different views and political affiliation from one's own. After the elections, we issued statements commending Zimbabweans for the generally peaceful and politically mature manner in which they conducted themselves before, during and soon after the elections.

Reports that are coming through to us from our Churches and members throughout the country indicate that the peaceful environment has, regrettably, changed:

Given the political uncertainty, anxiety and frustration created by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC's) failure to release the results of the presidential poll 4 weeks after polling day:

- Organized violence perpetrated against individuals, families and communities who are accused of campaigning or voting for the "wrong" political party in the March 29, 2008 elections has been unleashed throughout the country, particularly in the countryside and in some high density urban areas. People are being abducted, tortured, humiliated by being asked to repeat slogans of the political party they are alleged not to support, ordered to attend mass meetings where they are told they voted for the "wrong" candidate and should never repeat it in the run-off election for President, and, in some cases, people are murdered.
- The deterioration in the humanitarian situation is plummeting at a frightful pace. The cost of living has gone beyond the reach of the majority of our people. There is widespread famine in most parts of the countryside on account of poor harvests and delays in the process of importing maize from neighbouring countries. The shops are empty and basic foodstuffs are unavailable. Victims of organized torture who are ferried to hospital find little solace as the hospitals have no drugs or medicines to treat them.

As the shepherds of the people, we appeal:

- To the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) to work towards arresting the deteriorating political and security situation in Zimbabwe. We warn the world that if nothing is done to help the people of Zimbabwe from their predicament, we shall soon be witnessing genocide similar to that experienced in Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and other hot spots in Africa and elsewhere.
- For the immediate end to political intimidation and retribution arising from how people are perceived to have voted in the March 29, 2008 elections and arising from the desire to influence how people will vote in the anticipated run-off in the presidential poll. Youth militia and war veteran/military base camps that have been set up in different parts of the country should be closed as a step towards restoring the peace and freedom of people's movement that was witnessed before and during the March 29, 2008 elections.
- To ZEC to release the true results of the presidential poll of March 29, 2008 without further delay. The unprecedented delay in the publication of these results has caused anxiety, frustration, depression, suspicion and in some cases illness among people of Zimbabwe both at home and abroad. A pall of despondency hangs over the nation which finds itself in a crisis of expectations and governance. The nation is in a crisis, in limbo and no real business is taking place anywhere as the nation waits.
- To, finally, the people of Zimbabwe themselves. You played your part when you turned out to vote on 29 March 2008. We, again, commend you for exercising your democratic right peacefully. At this difficult time in our nation, we urge you to maintain and protect your dignity and your vote. We urge you to refuse to be used for a political party or other people's selfish end especially where it concerns violence against other people, including those who hold different views from your own. It was the Lord Jesus who said, "Whatever you do to one of these little ones, you do it unto me (*Matthew 25:45*).

We call on all Zimbabweans and on all friends of Zimbabwe to continue to pray for our beautiful nation. As the shepherds of God's flock, we shall continue to speak on behalf of Zimbabwe's suffering masses and we pray that God's will be done.

We remain God's humble servants:

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ)
The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC)
The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)