

For Press Release

CHURCH LEADERS STATEMENT ON NATIONAL CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE

We, as Church leaders in Zimbabwe (see the names in the footnotes), concerned and alarmed by the unfortunate unfolding events in our beloved country, saddened by the political, social and economic meltdown, which has caused untold suffering of the masses and the resultant civic unrest and violence that has erupted across the land and the failure by our Government and almost all political leaders to be responsive to the cries of our people.

Concerned by the apparent disregard of the Constitution of Zimbabwe by the police and Government through selective application of the law, failure to decisively deal with corruption, exclusion of citizens in determining their destiny and the politicization of people's genuine complaints and pains;

We are concerned about intra- party conflicts that are distracting Government from dealing with real economic and social issues that are affecting the country.

We are inspired by our call and mandate given to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to prophetically declare the Word of God and work for the common good for our communities;

*"...loose the chains of injustice and the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free"* (Isaiah 58:6)

and

*"Let justice run down like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"*

(Amos 5:24).

We call upon our Government to listen to the cries of citizens whose cries and sufferings are loud and clear. There is need to act justly and mercifully on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged in our nation.

As Church and community leaders, we condemn brutality by the law enforcement agencies on citizens. We implore the Government to redirect the law enforcement agencies to uphold their constitutional role of protecting citizens instead of brutalizing them. The citizens' constitutional right to demonstrate and protest must be protected. In exercising this right, we implore citizens to always remain peaceful in their demonstrations.

These are the issues people have raised that need to be addressed urgently:

- High unemployment rate of over 80%
- Need to account for the US\$15 billion diamond revenue that is reported to be missing by His Excellency the President,
- Moves to impose Bond Notes despite clear resistance from the economic sector and citizens,
- Loss of trust in Government's ability to pay its workforce as evidenced by the Stay Away on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 and continued threats of industrial action by civil servants,
- Collapsed parastatals caused by rampant corruption and high levels of unaccountability and impunity,

- Lack of consultation when implementing policies like the National School Pledge that has led to resistance and constitutional challenges from citizens,
- Imposition of restrictions on imports thus crippling cross border business and destroying livelihoods for thousands of Zimbabweans,
- Burden of unnecessary police roadblocks which are fueling corruption,

Given all this, citizens have lost confidence and trust in our Government. Therefore, there is urgent need for National Dialogue between the Government and different national stakeholders, towards finding a lasting solution than to ignore, politicize people’s genuine grievances and label them as opposition or demonize and harass the Church and her leaders.

We raise concern on growing harassment and arrests of religious leaders, such as the recent arrest of Pastor Evan Mawarire, and also the intimidation to other pastors speaking on behalf of powerless people.

These grievances must be viewed as the early warning signs which indicate underlying and simmering tensions that will soon explode into civil unrest if not addressed. We call upon the Government to immediately investigate and prosecute law enforcement agents that are alleged to have brutalized people. The Government should also urgently act and address these genuine concerns of the citizens to avoid total collapse of the State.

We call upon the Church, which is the salt and light of this nation, to continue to pray and also to speak out prophetically against any unjust system, until we have a peaceful and prosperous Zimbabwe in which every citizen’s God given and constitutional rights are respected.

The Zimbabwe We Want is a nation that respects the rights of all its citizens regardless of creed, gender, age, race and ethnicity; a nation where all citizens enjoy equal protection of the law; a nation that is God-fearing evidenced by the love for justice, righteousness, peace and loving one’s neighbour as oneself.

May God grant us Zimbabweans, the courage, faith and hope to face our challenges.

God Bless Zimbabwe and her people

