

ECUMENICAL SUMMIT ON ZIMBABWE

STATEMENT OF THE ECUMENICAL SUMMIT ON ZIMBABWE

1.

We have come together as followers of Jesus Christ from Southern Africa and from around the world, bound by our common faith and a shared concern for God's people in Zimbabwe. We are from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Madagascar, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana. We are mainly from the reformed tradition - particularly the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa - but not exclusively so. We include representatives of national councils of churches in South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana and Zambia, but also delegates from the World Council of Churches, the Fellowship of Councils of Churches in Southern Africa (FOCCISA) from the Council for World Mission, from the United Evangelical Mission and from Communauté d'Eglises en mission (Cevaa) and from churches in Europe, North America and the Caribbean - bodies with global constituencies. Together, we represent millions of people of faith around the world.

2.

Our concern is rooted in Christian values: justice, love and compassion. We believe that all people are created in God's image and are therefore worthy of equal dignity and respect. We hear the cries of all suffering people as the cry of Christ from the cross.

3.

For the past four days (14-17 July), we have participated in an Ecumenical Summit on Zimbabwe at Willow Park, Benoni, under the theme "Overcoming Fear by Faith". Delegates from Zimbabwe spoke about the injustices that the people of Zimbabwe face on a daily basis. We have heard firsthand accounts of the pain of our brothers, sisters and children who have endured assault, torture and intimidation. With our own eyes, we have seen evidence of the brutality and death that has been inflicted by the Mugabe regime. We have learnt of people subjected to extreme destitution because of economic chaos; people who go to bed hungry, who do not have access to the basic necessities for a healthy and dignified life; people who have been forcibly removed or intimidated into false displays of political affiliation.

4. These examples of human tragedy have persuaded us to conclude that -

- There is a profound crisis in Zimbabwe.
- Fear is endemic as a result of state-sponsored intimidation and political violence. Large numbers of people are being assaulted, abducted, tortured, displaced, maimed, and killed.
- The 27 June presidential "run-off" poll lacked any legitimacy; therefore it cannot be a starting point for negotiations. Instead, the will of the people expressed on 29 March must be respected and honoured. Our assessment coincides with that of the Heads of Christian Denominations in Zimbabwe and the electoral observer missions from SADC, the African Union and the Pan-Africa Parliament who have acknowledged the illegitimacy of the 27 June poll.
- The political crisis in Zimbabwe and its humanitarian consequences represent a threat to the entire region that demands urgent and co-ordinated action.

5.

Consequently we are called to respond to the people's cries by working for justice, peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Already, a range of stakeholders, including some churches, has been working vigorously to address aspects of Zimbabwe's overlapping crises and, in particular, to find political solutions. There is a need to recognise and to highlight the good work being done and to involve more stakeholders in these efforts to achieve reconciliation.

6. At the same time we recognise that we can do more. We commit ourselves to:

- Pray for an end to illegitimate rule in Zimbabwe and for honesty and transparency in the mediation process led by President Mbeki;
- Provide palliative and moral support for the people of Zimbabwe;
- Extend hospitality to those who have been displaced; and
- Covenant to pursue this issue of justice, as we have with previous issues linked with other nations, until Zimbabwe has a legitimate government.

7. We commend those governments who refuse to accept the legitimacy of Mugabe's regime, but governments, too, can do more. We call upon the governments of SADC nations to:

- Refuse to recognise the illegitimate government of Robert Mugabe;
- Impose targeted economic sanctions against the regime;
- Broaden the mediation effort by the appointment of additional mediators from SADC and the African Union to the mediating team;
- Use their influence to work for a transitional administration and a truly negotiated settlement; and
- Ensure that displaced Zimbabweans in the region and other parts of the world are granted refugee status and are treated with respect and dignity.

8. We urge President Mbeki in his role as mediator to:

- Recognise the extreme urgency of the situation and expedite the mediation process;
- Use his influence to halt political violence and protect the security of all Zimbabweans;
- Be seen to listen to a wider range of voices, including churches and civil society organisations, in order to avoid outcomes that simply represent the narrow interests of politicians; and
- Refrain from taking any action or making any statement that might be perceived to compromise his impartiality.

We make this urgent plea in solidarity with our suffering sisters and brothers in Zimbabwe and in the conviction that we are able to overcome fear by faith.

Adopted, 17 July 2008

Johannesburg