

3 June 2008

H.E. Levy P. Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia
Chairperson, Southern African Development Community

H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, President of the Republic of Tanzania
Chairperson of the African Union

H.E. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
The United Nations

Your Excellencies:

We write on behalf of the Mennonite World Conference, the Reformed Ecumenical Council, and the World Evangelical Alliance to express our distress over the deepening crisis in Zimbabwe. We have strong ties to Zimbabwe through our member churches there, with whom we have fellowshiped and whom we regularly hold up in prayer. It is our oneness in Jesus Christ that makes even deeper our concern and our desire to support Zimbabwean brothers and sisters at this critical time.

As international communities of churches, we have been seeking for years to stand in solidarity with the people and churches of Zimbabwe as they have passed through increasingly difficult times. We have been following recent events there with great concern and prayer. We grieve over the long process of economic and political disintegration that has brought suffering to many Zimbabweans, and especially over the rising violence in recent months.

As you know, on the 29th of March of this year, presidential elections were held in Zimbabwe, after which results were withheld from the public for more than a month. When the results were released, with no independent verification, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission declared that Morgan Tsvangirai, the candidate of the Movement for Democratic Change, had won 47.9 percent of the vote to incumbent President Robert Mugabe's 43.2. The need for a run-off was stated, and the date of 27th June 2008 eventually set. The MDC has claimed that the run-off is inappropriate, since their own count has Mr. Tsvangirai winning by a majority of 50.3 percent of the vote. However, Mr. Tsvangirai did announce his willingness to participate in a run-off. Yet for several weeks he was unable to return to Zimbabwe from South Africa for fear of his life. In the intervening period, we have received numerous reports from responsible sources that many people assumed to be opposed to Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF party have been beaten, tortured and killed by groups loyal to the ruling party.

We believe that Zimbabwe is at a very crucial time, and that action by African and other international leaders at the highest levels is imperative to prevent further violence and to begin a process of breaking out of the current highly volatile stalemate. First, with reference to the proposed run-off elections, we call for you to pressure the Zimbabwean government and ruling party to allow an international peace force to be present during the elections. Indeed, it is indispensable that the government of Zimbabwe immediately allow international (SADC, AU, UN) observers into the country. In light of broad and concordant reports of violence in the country, these observers should be given freedom to visit every corner of the country as they choose. Persons who have been displaced from their voting constituencies due to fear and violence must be brought back and protected so that they are able to exercise their right to vote in the June 27 election. Proper voting procedures must be universally observed, and results must be quickly and independently confirmed.

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We further believe that, given the potential for ongoing lack of clarity and resolution following the run-off elections, for the long-term re-stabilization of Zimbabwe, it is crucial for international bodies to insist that the ruling party in Zimbabwe come to a negotiating table to map out future directions for the country. This table must also include not only leaders of the Zimbabwean opposition, but members of Zimbabwe's military and security forces and leaders of church and civil society groups. Only with a carefully negotiated agreement can the deep divisions and distrust that has grown over the past decades begin to be healed.

We insist that the time for quiet diplomacy by friends of Mr. Mugabe to be effective is long past. Any further inaction by the African and international community will result in the continued repression of the people of Zimbabwe, and the deepening instability of the Southern African region.

Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Chairperson Kikwete, Mr. Chairperson Mwanawasa, we appeal to you to do all in your power to exert influence to change the self-destructive course of the government of Zimbabwe.

It is our hope and prayer that the global community of nations, led by the African community of nations, can mobilize to help save Zimbabwe, to restore hope to its people, and to revive Zimbabwe as the model and inspiration it once was.

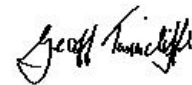
Respectfully yours,



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