



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

General Secretariat - Office for International Affairs and Human Rights

H.E. President John Kufuor
Chairperson, African Union
The Castle
Osu, Accra
Ghana

15 March 2007

Your Excellency,

I write on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) – a federation of 140 member churches in 70 countries, representing approximately 66.7 million people – to express the deepening concern and distress of our world-wide constituency with regard to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. The LWF has a member church in Zimbabwe, and also supports humanitarian and development co-operation activities in the country (as in many other countries in Africa).

As an international organization of churches, we stood in strong solidarity with the struggle for freedom and independence for Zimbabwe. We have ever since sought to assist the people of Zimbabwe as they strove for human development for their communities and nation. It is therefore with a special sense of grief and loss that we observe the current circumstances in which Zimbabwean people must struggle for a dignified life.

The national economy is in a widely acknowledged state of collapse. Hyper-inflation is robbing the nation of its wealth and its people of the means to provide for their families, and seriously undermining the capacities of international organizations such as ours to offer help to the suffering people. Ordinary Zimbabweans no longer feel secure in their own country, and many are crossing the border and becoming refugees. The grievances of the people with regard to poverty, unemployment, security, and abuse of power represent fundamental failures of government.

At the same time, the government of Zimbabwe is responding to the mounting calls for change and reform with unprecedented brutality and oppression. The attacks upon opposition leaders, human rights workers and journalists are mounting daily in number and severity. The recent incidents on 11 March 2007 and subsequently, in which participants in peaceful demonstrations and expressions of resistance have been imprisoned, attacked, wounded and killed, show that the government of Zimbabwe is prepared to use the instruments of State power against its own people in complete disregard for their human rights and for the government's own constitutional responsibilities.

We are, in short, witnessing the destruction of the dream that led to Zimbabwe's freedom and independence. The suffering of the people is now such that no further delay can be contemplated. The insecurity threatening the people of Zimbabwe also threatens the whole region. And in addition to destroying his own people and the image of his country, Mr



Mugabe's actions are destroying all possibilities for rebuilding the image of African political leadership in general.

It is noteworthy that the police action on 11 March 2007 was against participants in a peaceful prayer meeting. I draw your attention to the initiatives that churches in Zimbabwe are taking to promote justice and peace in such a difficult and dangerous context, including through the Ecumenical Peace Initiative which recently presented specific proposals to President Mugabe in a document entitled 'A New Vision'.

Mr President, I appeal to you to do all in your power to exert influence upon the government of Zimbabwe to change its self-destructive course, to cease its attacks upon its own people, to correct its failed economic policies, and to reverse its aggressive isolationism.

It is my earnest hope and prayer that the community of African nations can mobilize to help save Zimbabwe, to restore hope to its people, to revive Zimbabwe as the model and inspiration it once was, and to restore faith in African leadership in the world.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko
General Secretary