



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

Actions on Zimbabwe by LWF Council, Arusha, 25-30 June 2008

Public Statement

issued 26 June 2008

1. The Council of the Lutheran World Federation, meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, on the eve of the scheduled presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe on June 27, calls for an immediate end to political violence and repression in that country, and the restoration of the democracy for which so many Zimbabweans have struggled and died.
2. The Lutheran World Federation has long been gravely concerned by the disastrous economic, humanitarian and political situation in Zimbabwe. Today, we join former South African President Nelson Mandela in declaring that there has been a “tragic failure of leadership” in Zimbabwe. Indeed, the policies and practices of the current government have undermined the most basic political, economic and social rights of Zimbabweans.
3. We especially denounce the systematic, organized, politically-motivated intimidation and violence whereby the current government has sought to retain power. We note that the perpetrators of that intimidation and violence have not hesitated to target church leaders and clergy, as well as opposition party leaders and members, media representatives, academics, specific groups within Zimbabwean society, and anyone thought to have voted for the opposition in the March 29 elections. The attacks on Zimbabweans for exercising their right of democratic choice are directly contrary to the purpose of the struggle for Zimbabwe’s liberation from colonial rule.
4. All governments have a responsibility to ensure the safety, security and welfare of their citizens. Therefore, the government of Zimbabwe must act to prevent political violence by whoever committed it. Its failure to do so, and its apparent complicity in the violent repression, calls into question this government’s legitimacy.
5. The outcome of the March 29 elections – themselves conducted in far from ideal conditions – has already demonstrated that this government has lost the trust and support of Zimbabweans. The result of any presidential run-off election conducted under the current circumstances should not be recognized by the international community. We deeply regret the government of Zimbabwe to postpone the election and to take effective measures to ensure minimum conditions for a free and fair democratic process.
6. The international community has a legitimate interest and role to play in addressing the crisis in Zimbabwe. The world must not stand idly by, as it did during the genocide in Rwanda, and watch the unfolding of a human catastrophe. We welcome the fact that the United Nations Security Council has finally begun to address this matter by issuing a statement.



7. We especially welcome the rising chorus of concern from African political, religious and community leaders. We call on the Southern African Development Community and the African Union, and all African leaders, to take a more active role in promoting human security in Zimbabwe and encouraging a political transition back to the democracy that Zimbabweans have a right to expect.
8. Therefore, we call for the urgent establishment of a process for building peace in Zimbabwe in which all national actors, regional organizations and the international community are engaged.
9. For its part, the Lutheran World Federation stands ready to support the people of Zimbabwe in rebuilding their nation, and in restoring their betrayed hopes of a life in dignity and justice.
10. We call upon all LWF member churches to pray on Sunday July 6 for peace with justice for all Zimbabweans.

Resolution

adopted 30 June 2008

The LWF Council voted to:

- (1) Request the LWF President to write a pastoral letter to the heads of churches in Zimbabwe, expressing our hope and trust in God that God cares for and will save the suffering people of Zimbabwe.
- (2) Request the General Secretary to write a letter or letters to the chair of the African Union, heads of government in the African region, and the ecumenical community in Africa in order to encourage regional action to protect Zimbabwe's suffering people and to promote a return to genuine democracy.
- (3) Express particular concern for the situation of Zimbabweans who have fled the country as refugees, and gratitude for the hospitality of those neighboring countries that have received them.
- (4) Ask the General Secretary to undertake appropriate advocacy actions on behalf of Zimbabwean refugees in situations where they lack recognition or adequate support.
- (5) Request the LWF/DWS to consider possible action to better support Zimbabwean refugees in South Africa and in other host countries where DWS has a presence or an associate program.
