

**CALL FOR RESIGNATION  
OF MINISTER  
MUTSVANGWA >pg2**

**OF RURAL HWANGE  
WOMEN  
AND 'THATCHING  
GRASS' >pg7**

<b>COVID-19 WATCH</b>	<b>5308</b> cases	<b>3848</b> recoveries	<b>135</b> deaths
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## Churches unite on Zimbabwe situation

**C**hurch bodies in Zimbabwe, World Council of Churches and church affiliates, united in solidarity with the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference's pastoral letter which has been condemned by the government.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA) and global bodies, the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the World Methodist Council (WMC) united to reiterate that Zimbabwe was facing multiple crises that have made its citizens vulnerable.

EFZ said that the ZCBC statement contained the truth and needs to be embraced.

"We cannot find any reason to condemn them because what they articulated is the truth and nothing but the truth," said the statement.

EFZ in a statement (**read full statement on Page 5**) signed by the Executive Committee noted that only the deceitful or malicious can deny these truths.

ZCC in its solidarity statement (**read full statement on Page 3**), "Echoing 'The March is not ended', called citizens to be united across the different sectors realising that only through active citizenry will the nation be totally transformed.

The council called upon President Emmerson Mnangagwa to ensure that the personal attacks against Archbishop Ndlovu are retracted.

ZCA in its solidarity statement called on the government to receive the admonitions of church fathers with humility and seek repentance.



**Archbishop Robert Christopher Ndlovu**

In the statement released by the ZCA board of trustees, the organisation also said that Minister Mutsvangwa should retract her statement and resign.

The global church also reacted swiftly in solidarity to Zimbabwean churches. The Vatican this Monday also included Zimbabwe in its daily Catechesis.

The World Council of Churches said in its solidarity letter, "We have heard the laments of our sisters and brothers in your country and we are deeply concerned about the circumstances by which you are afflicted. We express our solidarity with all the people of Zimbabwe yearning for the realisation of their human rights, for justice, and for physical and economic security in their communities."

The global church body condemned the increasing use of force, intimidation and violence against people protesting these failures, targeting particularly those deemed to oppose the current government. It raised concerns on the mistreatment of journalists, political activists and other advocates for human rights as well as use of violence and sexual abuse as weapons against female political opponents and activists.

The global statement ended by encouraging the church to continue with its ministry to the vulnerable in the communities.

"We believe that the God of life calls us into action for justice for the oppressed. We pledge our solidarity with you as we lift up your cries for justice, dignity and protection of their human rights," said the WCC statement.

# Call for resignation of Minister Mutsvangwa

**The Zimbabwe Christian Alliance this Thursday released a press statement in solidarity with the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) pastoral letter and called for resignation of Minister Mutsvangwa.**

In the statement, the ZCA stated that the church has a biblical and constitutional mandate to speak truth to power in the spirit of nation building.

“This is what is reflected in the ZCBC pastoral letter. We reiterate the Bishops concerns that our nation is faced with multiple crises that include the economic meltdown, deteriorating health sector, deepening poverty both in urban and rural areas, unprecedented high levels of corruption and continued violation of the national constitution,” ZCA said.

“We condemn the attempt to single out the Most Reverend Archbishop Robert Christopher

Ndlovu on tribal grounds, therefore the endeavour to personalise a statement sent out by the entire ZCBC Bishops and leadership is unacceptable,” read the statement.

ZCA urged the government to take advice that they are being given by the Church bodies rather than turning a blind eye to it.

“We are concerned that this has been the trend on other engagements by the Churches with the government. James 4 verse 6 says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. We ask the government to receive admonition and advice from the church in humility as the Church fathers are speaking from the felt needs of the communities,” read the statement.

ZCA also mentioned that the statement by the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Monica Mutsvangwa threatened social cohesion and could deepen the divisions among the Zimbabweans.



**Minister Monica Mutsvangwa**

# **Zimbabwe Christian Alliance: Press Statement**

## **A Call to humility and renewal - 14 August 2020**

Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA) - a national Christian movement for justice and peace with grassroots structures of church leaders, youths,

and women in the country's ten provinces.

United in purpose and compelled by our scriptural calling to speak out for the weak and vulnerable according to Proverbs 31: 8-9. We recognize and appreciate efforts being made by the churches, regional and international players.

ZCA is deeply concerned about the state of crises faced by the nation, characterised by deep rooted corruption, violations of human rights, abductions, and arrests of citizens in violation of the country's constitution.

Citizens nationwide continue to report on abuse and excessive use of violence. The continued detention of journalist Hopewell Chin'ono and activist Jacob Ngarivhume at Chikurubi Maximum Prison where their lawyers report that they are being denied basic rights is a cause of concern. The reputation of Zimbabwe's judiciary system continues to be under siege because of reported cases of unlawful arrests and selective application of the law.

Beyond human rights violations, Zimbabwe is faced with a number of crises which include the continued economic meltdown of the country as prices of basic commodities are fluctuating daily beyond the reach of many Zimbabweans. The advent of Covid-19 has seen a humanitarian crisis and unprecedented levels of corruption that have left the health sector paralysed. We call upon the government to urgently address the salary grievances of the health professionals whose current working conditions without PPES

also place their lives at risk.

To add on, there is a national leadership crisis which is producing different layers of policy inconsistencies. Given all these scenarios, the agitation and anger of Zimbabweans expressed through the #ZimbabweanLivesMatter is very understandable.

We believe that there is an urgent need for the nation to return to implementing the constitution fully. If the constitution is implemented as the people of Zimbabwe wrote it in 2013, it will bring the necessary political, social and economic reforms and renewal that the nation desperately needs. We welcome the calls for national conversations and engagements from the churches, regional and international community.

However, the agenda on national dialogue should be from the communities and not a political elite settlement.

In that regard we are seized with community dialogues that are agenda setting on key issues for ordinary Zimbabweans. Part of these include outstanding issues to deal with the nation's violent past. We need to create a platform of dialogue that will acknowledge the past, apologise and work on new beginnings based on reconciliation.

We call on the nation's leadership to humbly recognize that we need to pause, reflect, dialogue and allow a process of renewal to take place. It is clear that the citizens and the nation cannot continue in the current state of affairs.



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## ***Echoing 'The March is not ended'***



*"Seek the Lord and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it. Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!" Amos 5 verse 6-7*

*Sunday, 16 August 2020*

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) read with grave concern, the government response to the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) pastoral letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 entitled "The March is not Ended". The government response presented by Mrs Monica Mutsvangwa, the minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, revealed the following worrying signs:

1. **Responsibility:** While the churches, including the ZCBC, have consistently identified the partial negative contribution of natural disasters and international isolation to government's economic performance, it has however noted with grave concern that, the Government of Zimbabwe consistently takes no responsibility for its own failings characterized by corruption, policy inconsistencies and above all, failure to unite the nation towards a common vision. The denialism that characterizes the Government of Zimbabwe's handling of criticism has now become a deeply worrying trend. The blame-shifting labelling of critical voices as 'regime change agents', and recently "terrorists" smacks of the government's unwillingness or inability to engage on the basis of ideas as well as robbing citizens of any hope that things can improve.
2. **Personalization:** Pastoral letters, including the "The March is not Ended", are products of prayerful discernment by the college of bishops informed by compassionate listening to the experiences of the congregants. Singling out the Most Revd Archbishop Richard Ndlovu, can only be viewed as undermining the most asset and character of the church that is its Unity. Our humble interpretation is that this is meant to isolate individuals from a collective discernment process with the sinister aim of diluting the collective voice of the church. The ZCC takes with exception any efforts to interfere with the unity of the Church for which Jesus prayed for in John 17:21.
3. **Courtesy:** The government response was overtly too emotional and disrespectful for formal communication. Using public media to utter disrespectful communication against the person of Archbishop Ndlovu does not only present the government as inappropriately deploying the resources of the state, but also increases the toxicity that is already characterizing our public space. If the government had strong objections to the Bishops' communication, it could have addressed those issues without appearing to be discourteous to the viewers of the only national television station. The government will do well through its public officials to instil positive engagement on the basis of ideas than to use public media to buttress negativity.
4. **Unity:** The government response to the pastoral letter "The March is not Ended", also missed its unifying and national orientation but instead appropriated distorted historical links and false comparisons with the Rwandan genocide. While the comparisons are unfounded and outrageous, they also seem to be intentionally or unintentionally stoking ethnic and tribal divisions which actually resulted in loss of thousands of lives in Matabeleland and Midlands during the Gukurahundi. To frivolously associate the bishops' statement with such a major deep scar in the history of the nation, is not only insensitive to the existing present pain of those affected by Gukurahundi, but also gives the impression that the government is paying lip-service to national healing and reconciliation. The government statement could have been worth ignoring if it was only falsifying history, but it cannot be ignored as it appears dismissive of the invaluable work done by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, under the ZCBC, to offer documentation of the atrocities committed by the army during that dark period. The legacy of Gukurahundi still stalks the nation as those past hurts remain unhealed. His Excellency, President ED Mnangagwa has on several occasions spoken of the need to find healing on these past hurts, yet the government position gives the false impression that the 1987 Unity Accord brought closure to that episode.

5. **History:** The ecumenical churches' relationship with the state has been consistent from colonial Rhodesia to independent Zimbabwe. The government response presented by Minister Mutsvangwa, seeks to create false discontinuity between the contemporary bishops and the suffering servants of the past. Such a view misses the importance of continuity of Tradition within Christian theology and practice. The consistency with which the ZCBC and the ecumenical church have pursued justice, peace and unity cannot be forgotten. Coincidentally, the issues raised by the "The March is not Ended" of the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 are fundamentally similar to calls by Bishop Donal Raymond Lamont in his Open letter to the Rhodesian Government on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1976. In both cases, the message was well-meaning and consistent with the prophetic traditions of Micah, Amos, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and even our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have responded to this salvation history with repentance found life. Those who rejected it suffered destruction, not only in a spiritual sense but also materially.

### **Calls**

6. In light of the issues raised above, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches:
- 6.1 Seeks to affirm its solidarity with the spirit and intent of the "The March is not Ended" as honest communication aimed at calling the government of Zimbabwe to meaningful and respectful engagement to find solutions to the current pressing issues,
  - 6.2 Seeks to enter into a collective discernment process to understand this government's preparedness to engage and hence calls for the urgent convening of the National Episcopal Conference of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations to deliberate on the state of the nation and agree on the appropriate ecumenical action
  - 6.3 Calls on all Christians and churches to pray for peace, well-being and courage for Archbishop Ndlovu, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference and the broad Christian Church in Zimbabwe as they will be demanded to exercise their prophetic and pastoral mandate for the nation.
  - 6.4 Calls on all citizens to remain united across the denominational, ethnic, and political divide realizing that only through active, organized and peaceful citizens' participation, the nation will be totally transformed.
  - 6.5 Calls upon President E.D Mnangagwa to provide leadership by retracting the personal attacks on Archbishop Ndlovu and the church leaders, but invite the national to an inclusive national dialogue towards a homegrown solution to the challenges that are facing the nation.



*"Seek the Lord and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it. Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!"* **Amos 5 verse 6-7**



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*"Advancing the Spirit of Evangelism"*

## Solidarity Statement with the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference's Pastoral Letter on the Current Situation in Zimbabwe of 14 August 2020,

17 August 2020

### WE STAND WITH THE TRUTH AS ARTICULATED BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him"- John 18:38

1. We the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) encompassing 845 member bodies representing over 4.5 million Christians wish to categorically state that we stand in solidarity with the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference (ZCBC). As it is said "we cannot find any reason to condemn them" because what they articulated is the truth, and nothing but the truth.
2. On 14 August 2020 the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) published a pastoral letter that "bears witness to the truth" that every ordinary Zimbabwean knows and faces every day. We stand with the truth that the Catholic Bishops so ably articulated; **a truth that affects our people on a daily basis; the truth of a multi layered crisis of the convergence of economic collapse, deepening poverty, food insecurity, corruption and human rights abuses among many others. "The ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire ";** we stand with this truth as depicted in Micah 7:3 and articulated by the Catholic Bishops. We stand with the truth **"that the government is focused on things other than national democratic priorities"**
3. Only the deceitful or malicious can deny these truths. Like Pontius Pilate, there maybe those who cannot or will not see the truth even when it stares them in the face shackled in chains and falsely accused. They would rather call the silence of the oppressed "peace", the brutality of force "justice" and the abnormality that people struggle with every day as "normal". Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and when this happens every truth is a lie and a veiled threat and every disagreement a revolt. It is true that "If the eye is evil the whole body should be full of darkness" - Matthew 6:22
4. In our Pastoral Letter issued on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 we stated that Zimbabwe is indeed in a crisis-the crossroads between danger and opportunity. *"The arrest of citizens and prohibition of mass action has not dented the momentum of discontent and agitation but instead has caused it to gain regional and international attention through the #ZimbabweanLivesMatter which has gone viral. Arbitrary arrests, abductions, torture and suppression of people's anger can only serve to deepen the crisis and take the nation into deeper crisis"*. We further called on the ruling authorities to utilize the window that still exists to turn danger into opportunity by entering into dialogue to address the underlying causes of the current crisis and realize the Zimbabwe we all want.
5. True democracy is not built on threatening and criticizing those who speak up or speak out; it is not in denying inconvenient and unpalatable truth; it is not demonizing those we disagree with. Democracy welcomes truth. Democracy is built on the search for truth. Feet and bodies may have been stopped on the 31st of July 2020 but the truth still marches on. Harsh criticism may be poured out on the Church and its leaders but the truth still marches on. Abductions, torture and incarcerations maybe unleashed on journalists and every voice of dissent but the truth will still march on like it did during the struggle for independence against more sophisticated and superior force of arms, and a State machinery that made every aspirant of freedom a hunted terrorist.
6. Truth may be on the cross today and wrong may be on the throne but on the third day it will rise again because the truth still marches on.
7. We reiterate the need for an inclusive engagement, dialogue and transformation.

#ZimbabweanLivesMatter #ZimbabweWeWant

BY ORDER OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*"An Alliance of Evangelicals Impacting the Nation by Obeying the Great Commission"*



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## **Zimbabwe Christian Alliance Solidarity Statement with the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference**

We stand in Solidarity with our Bishops.

The Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, a national network of Church and Christian leaders with hub structures in the country's ten provinces, stands in solidarity with the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) pastoral letter released on 14 August 2020. We note the response of the government to the pastoral letter from ZCBC. We are concerned that this has been the trend with other engagements by the Churches with government. James 4 verse 6 says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. We ask the government to receive admonition and advice from the church in humility as the Church fathers are speaking from the felt needs of the communities.

Concerned about peace and nation building we want to state the following:

1. The Church has a Biblical and Constitutional mandate to speak truth to power in the spirit of nation building. This is what is reflected in the ZCBC pastoral letter.
2. We condemn the attempt to single out the Most Reverend Archbishop Robert Christopher Ndlovu on tribal grounds and therefore the endeavour to personalise a statement sent out by the entire ZCBC Bishops and leadership is unacceptable.
3. We reiterate the bishops concerns that our nation is faced with multiple crises that include the economic meltdown, deteriorating health sector, deepening poverty both in urban and rural areas, unprecedented high levels of corruption and continued violation of the national constitution.
4. Statement by the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Monica Mutsvangwa threatens social cohesion and could deepen the divisions among Zimbabweans. We appeal that she withdraws it, apologises and is relieved of her position.
5. This statement by the Minister Mutsvangwa is threatening the Church's freedom of worship and moral authority which is enshrined in the country's constitution.
6. There is an urgent need to start honest and victim centred national dialogue on the historical wounds of this nation to bring healing, reconciliation and closure
7. Thus, the march is not ended towards full implementation of the constitution, rule of law, healing and reconciliation to ensure that **#Zimbabweanlivesmatter**

Inserted by

**Zimbabwe Christian Alliance Board of Trustees**



# Vic Falls Council roll out budget consultation process

**V**ictoria Falls Municipality will this Monday begin the process of soliciting resident's input into the 2021 council budget.

The notice was issued on Thursday last week stating: "Notice is hereby given that Victoria Falls Municipality will conduct the 2021 budget stakeholders meetings from 17 August 2020 to 21 August 2020. The public is therefore advised to take note of the dates and attend respectively."

Ward 1 and 3 will meet at 10 AM at council main office followed by ward 2 and business community at 1PM in the same venue.

On Tuesday Ward 4, 5, 6 and 7 will also meet at Chinotimba Hall between 10AM and 1PM.

Ward 8, 9 and 10 will also convene the following

day at the same venue.

On Thursday Ward 11B and C will meet at 10 AM at Chamabondo Primary School.

The Women and Special Interest (youths) group will convene on Thursday between morning and afternoon at Council chamber while Ward 11A will conclude the meeting at Chamabondo Primary school on Friday afternoon.

The Town Clerk Ronnie Dube urged residents to attend the meetings citing that Council has been operating under severe strain.

"This is a statutory requirement and it is also good to have people's input stating how they will want the budget to be presented, their needs and expectations," Dube said.

"We have had so many pressures from people calling us to reverse the budget after accusing



us of failing to consult, so to avoid that, people should attend these meetings and have their say.

"We have been severely affected by the economic situation in the country and Covid-19 and our service delivery has not been as fluent so this budget will be based on figures that will maintain a minimum service delivery possible until the capital expenditure returns back to normal."

To observe the Covid-19 regulations, Council said participants will be allowed in the venue on a first come first serve basis and the maximum numbers will be 50.

Council added that only participants wearing masks will be allowed in after sanitizing and maintaining social distancing. **Source-CITE**

## Of rural Hwange women and 'thatching grass'

**H**wange is synonymous with wild game, abundant tourists and gigantic coalfields which conversely creates employment for the predominant Nambya and Tonga speaking communities.

Besides accommodating large herds of wild animals, the place is awash with large swaths of grass which has multifaceted benefits to the surrounding communities. For animals, the grass provides succulent nutrients for their growth wherein for humans the grass is sometimes used as brooms, for igniting fire, as chicken fowl runs and invariably for thatching their homes. A quick glimpse of well-manicured thatched huts in areas like Dopota, Lupote Jwaphe, and Chezhou is a marvel to watch. All manner of decorations are adorned using grass. Marvellous decorations of elephant's lions, familial totems can be seen decked in these huts.

To a passer-by the process is eye catching but to the villagers herein the end product is a daunting task. The famed thatching grass which is scientifically commonly known as Hyparrhenia hirta is abundant in these areas. Hitherto the process of cutting grass lies primarily with women, who often go for a month long 'grass cutting trips'.

Many households have been sustained through this intergenerational trade. Through profits

realised herein some villagers have managed to pay school fees for their children and provide food for the families.

However, these sojourns to cutting grass are habitually hazardous to the women cutter. Most of the cutting does take place within the vicinity of the Hwange National Park. Herein regular brushes with dangerous wild animals such as elephants, lions and snakes are common. Snake bites, near trampling constitute the common folklore within the vicinity.

Undeterred by these dangers herein the women continue to go about their business pushed by hunger and poverty back home. Game park rangers also repeatedly try to stop the women from cutting grass in areas. Occasionally these rangers do catch one or two women and take them for detention in Dete.

The recent slump in the tourism sector due to Covid-19 has had an adverse impact on these entrepreneurial women. Seasonal they do supply lodges dotted around the National Park with grass for thatching. Lodges such as Ivory Lodge, Hwange Safari Lodge, and Sikumi Lodge are some of the resort places that support these women. However due to the surge in pandemic the demand from these places had waned thereby affecting women.

## Cities and Towns Updates

**HWANGE:** The price of goods continues to escalate daily, and it is beyond the reach of many citizens. There are now two Zupco buses in Hwange, previously the area has been serviced by one bus which has caused serious transport challenges.

**TSHOLOTSHO:** It was very busy as people mostly vendors were purchasing their goods. Three nurses have been reported to have tested Covid-19 positive. Another lady from South Africa also tested positive and has been requested to self-isolate at her home. These new developments have prompted people to be on the alert as far as Covid-19 is concerned. Buses and private transporters are overloading passengers as there are a few vehicles on the road. Those travelling to Bulawayo are resorting to boarding lorries and Honda fits.