

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NATAL

STATEMENT ON ZIMBABWE

We the Anglican Diocese of Natal are deeply concerned with the developments taking place in our neighbouring Zimbabwe. Since 2000, we have consistently expressed our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe through a ministry of listening and presence. In the run up to the March 2008 elections, our parishes have prayed for peace, justice and God's will to prevail.

From listening and living with Zimbabweans in the 2008 election period, we have been humbled by the calmness and resilience which the majority of citizens have shown in the face of state aggression against the people – before, during and after the elections.

In the period leading to the elections, President Mugabe unilaterally declared polling dates thereby undermining the Southern African Development Community (SADC) initiated dialogue between ZANU PF and the two MDC political parties. He went on to undermine the gains of the Constitutional Amendment No. 18 which the political parties had seen as a confidence building measure in the crisis-torn country. The State and the Incumbent still held on to the control of the electoral process leaving the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as an honorary body, or, at best, as an implementing agency for the State, and not an independent decision-making body responsible for the running of the electoral process. State-controlled and tax payer-supported media, which includes the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, radio and newspapers like the Herald, were not only used to exclude the vast majority from the electoral process, but also to intimidate and denigrate any Zimbabwean who did not align themselves with the ZANU PF.

It is no wonder that it has taken the ZEC this long to release the full results of the election. In this moment of anxiety, the State, working with some sections of ZANU PF, has mobilized tools and instruments of terror that are reminiscent of the 2000 and 2002 state-organized violence. Thus while the voting took place in a quiet and calm manner, it was not at all peaceful. We hear the cries of our brothers and sisters who are being abducted at night, being beaten for having voted against ZANU PF and those being arrested on suspicious grounds.

We are perplexed by the muted response of many of our leaders in South Africa and their lack of urgency in the face of imminent civil strife. We wish to assure our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe that we continue to share in their pain and anxiety and will hold them high in our prayers. We also want to remind the leaders of the SADC region and the African Union of their responsibilities in protecting the rights and dignity of people who are under siege from their State.

We call upon the South African and regional governments to be hospitable to Zimbabweans fleeing their country in the given circumstances, and to urgently invest in activities that can bring peace and justice in Zimbabwe. We also urge the international community to call for the immediate release of the election results and to mediate a peace deal in Zimbabwe.

Issued by: The Bishop of Natal, the Right Revd Rubin Phillip, 11th April 2008
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