



URGENT PRESS RELEASE

Diakonia Council of Churches joins call for Mugabe's removal

The current situation in Zimbabwe has become morally and ethically unacceptable. As the world leaders increasingly express their views and hope for an end to the crisis facing our neighbour, the Diakonia Council of Churches wish to add their voice to those who call for an immediate end to the current impasse. We echo the sentiments expressed by the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference: "No effort must be spared in ensuring that a political solution to the current impasse is found."

With news from the World Health Organisation that more than 1000 people have died as a result of the cholera epidemic ravaging the country, with more than 20 000 others already infected, and reports of further abductions, torturing and deaths of activists working for peace in that country, the time has come for our leaders to act decisively.

It is abundantly clear to us that, as it is to the rest of the world and should be to our political leaders, Robert Mugabe is no longer a leader. He no longer represents the interests of his people and has, for too long, clutched onto power through illegal means and rules by fear and intimidation.

All efforts to arrive at a political solution which would include both ZANU (PF) and MDC, have failed. These efforts have failed the people of Zimbabwe who have suffered unspeakably, over many years. These efforts, although gallant, hold no promise for the people of Zimbabwe, as Mugabe refuses to relinquish control or to arrive at a meaningful settlement.

We call on our president, and the leaders of SADC, the AU and UN, as well as all others who are willing and able, to immediately act towards the removal of Robert Mugabe from office, and to work towards an interim government tasked to manage the country away from its course towards total and irreversible collapse.

We call on all those who support the ZANU (PF) regime, in whatsoever way, to immediately cease such support, with a view to their complete isolation and

eventual removal. We support the call to end South Africa's supply of electricity and fuel to Zimbabwe.

Chairperson of Diakonia Council of Churches, Bishop Barry Wood, OMI, said: "We call on all people of faith to pray fervently for the swift hand of delivery for the people of Zimbabwe. Mugabe is likened to the Pharaoh of Egypt whose heart is so hardened that even the firstborn children of the land are now dying by the thousands, and the time has arrived for the people to be released from tyranny. We, the Diakonia Council of Churches, have often spoken out against the injustices of the Mugabe regime, but the time for talking and speaking seems to have past. It is now time for our country to act, and to do so with haste and in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe, not with a tyrant and evildoer, such as Mugabe has become."

ENDS

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