

"I have seen the Miserable State of my People ... I have heard their Cry" (Ex 3:7)

We the three Christian Church Mother Bodies namely: the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) are repeatedly saddened at the rampant political violence that keeps on popping its ugly face especially in the recent by-elections. As people who have a God given mandate of exercising the prophetic mission in our nation and in our time, we cannot tolerate such abominable and immoral acts being committed right before our very eyes. Our nation today, stands at the crossroads and we are in a crisis.

Joint Press Statement issued by the Three Christian Church Umbrella Organizations

The Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), The Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC)

"I have seen the Miserable State of my People ... I have heard their Cry" (Ex 3:7)

We the three Christian Church Mother Bodies namely: the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) are repeatedly saddened at the rampant political violence that keeps on popping its ugly face especially in the recent by-elections. As people who have a God given mandate of exercising the prophetic mission in our nation and in our time, we cannot tolerate such abominable and immoral acts being committed right before our very eyes. Our nation today, stands at the crossroads and we are in a crisis. We face many challenges related with governance and survival, among which, are increasing levels of poverty among the majority of our people, a pervading cancer of

rampant corruption, escalating youth unemployment, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, an education system that is falling apart, a poor health service delivery coupled with the unclear constitution making process, the gagging or muzzling of people's freedoms, the arrests of the opposition party leaders and human rights violations. As Zambians, we all need to examine our conscience, seek the truth and work towards bringing back hope to our people.

In our joint statement issued on 27th February 2013, we appealed for calm in the aftermath of the violence and the unfortunate death of Mr. Harrison Chanda in the run up to the by-elections in Livingstone which were prudently postponed by the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ). We also proposed that instead of playing the usual political game of finger pointing and name calling, time had come for all Zambians to seriously engage in a process of soul-searching and discernment. Our politics have sunk so low as we recently experienced loss of life during political campaigns. This development is unacceptable and must not be tolerated. Indeed, is this the level our politics has come to - of killing one another just for greed and want of political office? We do not want our democracy to go that route where instead of preserving life and protecting the citizens, our people risk death during times of heightened political activities.

We must create a new democratic dispensation. Our democracy came at high cost and we should all endeavor to protect it and help sustain this philosophy of governance.

We should all seek to come together to safeguard and promote the culture of peaceful, genuine and democratic elections in this great nation which for many years now has been the pride and envy of this region and the continent of Africa.

1. By-elections

We are seeing a strange phenomenon that raises great concern, with the rate at which by-elections in our country are being held. Whilst we acknowledge the fact that the Zambian laws provide for the holding of by-elections to fill a vacant seat in Parliament, or at local government levels, we are seriously questioning the justification and authenticity of many of these parliamentary by-elections. Even though these elections are being held within the provisions and confines of the law, we are also increasingly seeing more and more

by-elections being instigated or motivated by greed, individual interests and a selfish propensity for political dominance by the ruling party and the desire for ministerial positions by the MPs that are lured into resignations from their political parties, or that in case such MPs were expelled, they would still be adopted to recontest their seats on another ticket. Also we question the integrity of these by-elections. Who is really behind the current spell of elections? What value are these by-elections adding to our political environment? Why are our leaders so ready to waste such colossal sums of money in the campaigns whilst our hospitals still face a critical shortage of medical staff, equipment and essential drugs? We question the integrity of those who are crossing the floor in parliament for the sake of receiving political favors or appointments. We therefore call upon our leaders to prudently exercise the power that the Zambian people have entrusted in them. Many of our hospitals, schools and other service centres cannot offer quality services due to inadequate funding. This is because they are subordinated to wrong priorities as everyone seems to be pre-occupied with by-elections.

At the same time, while we acknowledge the fact that the Republican President has the constitutional power to appoint any Member of Parliament as Cabinet or Deputy Ministers, we urge the government to dialogue with the leaders of Political Parties before such appointments are made. In other words, care must be taken to avoid creating an impression of political poaching which often leads to expulsions of those who accept the appointments because their parties do not approve of them. We question as to how many deputy ministers the government can appoint. The increasing number of appointments of cabinet deputy ministers eventually leads to a bloated cabinet which is what the people of this country have always rejected in preference for a lean Cabinet as promised by the PF government.

We pray that the new constitution, which is being drafted, will provide for mechanisms that will prevent unnecessary by-elections. In fact, we believe that the efficacy and legitimacy of the current PF government will be tested on how quickly they can deliver a new Republican Constitution which will cure all the lacunas which seem to be exploited by those whose only interest is either to gain or cement their continued stay in office. We are deeply concerned about the new constitution making process because of a number of issues that have not been addressed such as the timeframe, and the mode of adoption of the final constitution.

B. Our Message of Strong Appeal

1. To the Government:

We ask the government to avoid giving threats and using decrees in leading the nation. The government should use the instruments of power to serve and protect the citizenry of this country and promote peace and meaningful dialogue. We urge the government to quickly engage their colleagues in the opposition when dealing with critical national issues. True democrats win support by means of political persuasion rather than crushing those with opposing views. As servants of the people who voted you into power, you should always put first the interest of the majority Zambians who are poor, unemployed and do not have access to basic social services and other basic needs.

2. To all the Political Parties:

We call upon all political parties to also engage in a process of soul-searching. As your pastors and shepherds, we are deeply disturbed when we hear of the continued in-fighting and see attempts by some prominent members of your parties to wash the dirty linen in public. What is even more worrying is the continued culture of using both hate and tribal speech. Not only that, we do wonder where drunken, violent and unrepentant cadres come from. Who actually buys alcohol for them and transport them to places where by-elections are taking place? Are these not the same things we condemned in the previous regime? Aren't Zambians justified in questioning whether they made the right choice? We therefore appeal to you the leaders across the political spectrum to demonstrate maturity, dignity and magnanimity in the way you exercise your leadership and in the manner you relate to each other. Your focus should be to promote the common good and especially uplifting the lives of the poor and neglected in our beloved country.

Our democracy will suffer greatly if the opposition is weakened. This will neither benefit government nor the citizens. We have been through a one party system of governance before. It is the last thing we would wish for this nation.

3. To the Zambia Police Service:

As we (the three Church Mother Bodies) argued in the run up to the 2011 Tripartite Elections, we once more say that, "The burden of ensuring that law and order is observed in the country lies on all of us the people of Zambia. The police however carry a special mandate to enforce law and order where our society fails to voluntarily observe it. Given the diverse interests we

have in our country especially during elections, the Police Service has to stand firm but always impartial. There have been many accusations against the police service pointing to the fact that it sometimes fails to be impartial when policing political activities and that the police service has tended to favor the ruling party. We call upon the police command to work at rebranding the negative image it continues to project in the eyes of the general public".

We therefore wish to see a more professional police command that should come up with a publicized clear program of action on how they intend to police political activities during campaigns and other political activities in this nation. Police should ensure that they are not manipulated by anybody aimed at advancing expediency or impunity out of selfish motives.

4. To the Media:

We have always valued the pivotal role played by the media in our democratization process. As God says, "My people perish for lack of knowledge ..." (Hosea 4:6). We have therefore consistently called upon the media to foster their mandate of informing and educating the public with courage and resilience but also with fairness to everyone. The divide that has been created in Zambia where the public media is exclusively dedicated to the propaganda of government and the ruling party while a few private media on the other hand give more attention to the opposition is not healthy. We strongly believe that the media should be governed by common standards of projecting the truth. Indeed, who is going to stop the cycle of character assassination that we often see or hear about in our print and electronic media?

The church does not want to see a repeat of the acts of demonizing leaders as President Sata was demonized while in the opposition. The church's expectation is that this should not perpetuate itself as it is an evil which should go away and the media should ensure that they rise to the occasion in stopping this objectionable tendency. We believe that the media should help in preventing the dissemination of insults and hating information and toning down the sensationalizing information involving different persons.

5. To the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):

As we have maintained in the past, CSOs play an important role in educating, organizing and mobilizing the public on many critical national issues. We call upon them to redouble their efforts in facilitating citizens to make meaningful participation in our electoral process and in promoting good governance. They should promote voter literacy, sensitize people against apathy and

challenge all actors in the electoral process to behave in an objective manner that offers respect for the rights of other people in the process.

6. To our Fellow Clergy Men and Women:

We hereby exhort you to continue performing the God-given mandate of providing a prophetic voice in our society. Do not abuse the pulpit for partisan politics and do not ever fall prey to political enticements and corruption. Do not be afraid to preach the truth in love and we urge you to continue to call the powers that be to do greater justice to your flock and those outside of your assemblies, parishes and congregations. Never tire at proclaiming the message of truth, justice, peace, love, unity, forgiveness and reconciliation. As St. Paul exhorts us: *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”* (Gal. 6:9).

7. To all Zambians:

If you really love your country, do not sit by the fence and simply watch as things are going wrong. In addition do not be counted with those who cause violence or promote wrong doing. *“As the saying goes, “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for a few good people to do nothing”.*

We appeal to all

Zambians to stay away from corruption and the prevailing culture of lying, hero worshipping, rumor mongering, violence and hate or tribal speech. Rather, we call you to embrace and promote the culture of national unity, honesty, moral integrity, transparency, accountability, peace, hard work, love and forgiveness. Let us all resolve to make our country better and more democratic. Let us not allow anyone to divide us, draw us backward or blind us from the truth. Rather, let us all remain vigilant and safeguard our hard won liberties including the responsible use of freedoms of speech, movement and association. Zambia is bigger than any one person and certainly bigger than any one political party.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we demand that efforts be made to have an all inclusive national Indaba which should address the many challenges we are facing as a young and growing democracy. We firmly believe that this nation can overcome all our current political differences through genuine dialogue and guidance.

May God bless this great nation.

Issued on 15th March, 2013

Signed

Rev. Suzanne Matale Rev. Pukuta N. Mwanza Fr. Cleopas Lungu

General Secretary Executive Director Secretary General

Council of Churches in Zambia Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia Zambia Episcopal Conferenc

(CCZ) (EFZ) (ZEC)

