



Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia

*"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" – (Ps. 133:1-3)*

### 4th November 2014

When the news of the passing of President Sata was announced on 29th October 2014 by the Secretary to the Cabinet, a sombre mood swept through every corner of the country with scores of people sharing the sad news on their social media networks and many still got glued to the radio and television sets to get additional information regarding the demise of the Head of State. The news of death is often received with mixed reactions ranging from sadness, fear, anxiety, worry and uncertainty.

The reflection on the life of the deceased brings back either fondest memories or some of the most painful realities. The good memories affect some people so much because of the fact that such people will not be seen again on this side of eternity. They are gone.

From the time the news of the death of President Sata was announced, we have observed some of the most unfavourable developments unfolding among those closest to the deceased. As a church, we are deeply saddened with some media reports about some individuals starting to express their interest to run for Presidency in the Patriotic Front either with the aim of continuing the (so called) legacy or to carry on the vision of President Sata. Although the interested persons are free to exercise their democratic right to vie for any public office that may fall vacant, we have been shocked at the level of interest and speed at which such interests have been expressed and shamelessly made public. We feel extremely disappointed with such conduct that shows disrespect to the deceased. The timing is totally incorrect as this is being done during the mourning period.

The members of the ruling party (The Patriotic Front) should immediately address the problem

of power and succession wrangles and allow the late president to be put to rest in a dignified and most honourable manner before they can start to express their personal desires to be considered for adoption to run for Presidency in the Patriotic Front as well as to contend in the Presidential by-elections due within the 90 day window after the passing of the president. Such kind of behaviour can only be interpreted that such people saw the death of the President as an opportunity for succession and not as a loss. They are not grieving with the majority of the Zambians but instead, they are celebrating. This is very strange and extremely disheartening. Where do the party members and family members get the strength to talk about who should become the next President before the body is interred? How do they attract sympathy from other people who want to stop doing anything else in order to identify with this tragic loss? How do others mourn a bereavement that is not considered serious by those closest to the deceased?

We have observed that leaders of other Political Parties have sent their messages of condolences and grief following the passing of the President and they have demonstrated patriotism and maturity in putting aside their strong political differences in order to unite in mourning the late President Sata. A number of them also went to the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport to witness the arrival of the aeroplane bringing the remains of President Sata. This is the way it should be.

On the contrary, the apparent lack of unity within Patriotic Front is alarming and raises great concern. The sharp divisions are clearly evident because the party has been grouped around cliques. Such behaviour is affecting the spirit of grief and is robbing the people of Zambia of their opportunity to mourn their President in the most respectful manner. It is disheartening that some people are busy working on succession plans while the nation is mourning. This must not be entertained at any cost. The leaders should address this problem because it has serious potential to disrupt the funeral proceedings. Campaigns can wait and the people of Zambia have been patient enough to wait for the official notification of the date of the Presidential by-elections at which time those seeking to contest the Presidential seat will be free to campaign within the confines of the law.

As a church we wish to express our utter displeasure with the pre-mature disclosure of interest to run for presidency by various individuals that have been reported in the media because such pre-occupation is unacceptable in the midst of mourning.

We also wish to appeal to the Acting Republican President, Dr Guy Scott who is also Acting President of the Patriotic Front to exercise restraint in decisions being undertaken particularly within the Ruling Party. The timing of the most recent action is of utmost concern, as it appears

to have triggered demonstrations that threaten the peace of the nation. Why can't such decisions wait until the mourning period elapses? While we condemn the recent demonstrations and riotous behaviour, we counsel that Party leaders must not be perceived to be acting provocatively or indirectly exacerbating anger and tension in the country. There is a huge responsibility that rests on the Ruling Party to model tolerance, unity and stability.

Zambians must unite during and after the national mourning period. This is what will form a firm foundation for peaceful political campaigns once the election date has been announced. In any case, it is important to know that God is the one who appoints leaders and personal efforts are applied only in line with the will of God.

We call upon the church to continue in prayer and not tire in the task of consoling the nation at this trying time.

**May God bless our great nation.**

**Signed:**

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