

Global Christian leaders censure Africans for failures in Zimbabwe: Catastrophe growing worse

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Leaders of global Christian organizations have criticized African heads of state for their failure to address a growing humanitarian crisis in the southern African nation of Zimbabwe.

In a statement on November 14 they called on “the Zanu-PF party [of Robert Mugabe] and the MDC [the Movement for Democratic Change] to form a government based on the will of the voters, true equity and in the interest of real and durable political progress, socioeconomic transformation and national healing.”

The statement is signed by the leaders of the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World YWCA, the World Student Christian Federation and the World Alliance of YMCAs. The general secretary of the WCC, Samuel Kobia, is Kenyan; the WARC general secretary, Setri Nyomi, is Ghanaian; and the YWCA head, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, is Zimbabwean.

“It is time to give priority to the people through servant leadership instead of self-serving power politics. It is also time for Africa’s leaders to face up to each other with honesty and truth and take firm decisions that will provide a foundation for a durable solution to the protracted crisis in Zimbabwe,” said the Christian leaders.

Joined by the Zimbabwe Advocacy Office in Geneva, the Christian groups said they were making their request following a November 10 meeting of leaders from the 12 nations making up the Southern African Development Community. The SADC leaders failed to agree on a way of overcoming an impasse in implementing a power-sharing agreement for Zimbabwe brokered in September by then-South African president Thabo Mbeki.

The Geneva-based world Christian groups expressed deep disappointment with the SADC leadership for “failing to fully address the growing humanitarian catastrophe and question of illegitimacy of the current government.”

Christian leaders referred to a severe cholera outbreak that has claimed hundreds of lives since August. They went on to say: “People living with HIV/AIDS have no access to life-saving drugs or food. Schools and hospitals are closing daily because there are no teachers, doctors, nurses or medicines. Millions of Zimbabweans are starving despite the best efforts of aid agencies.

“Church leaders in Zimbabwe have confirmed that many are now surviving on wild fruit. Gaining access to water, food, electricity and even cash from the bank has become a daily nightmare for ordinary Zimbabweans,” said the statement. “With a hungry and demoralized civil service, no one is taking proper responsibility to ensure accountable and efficient public service delivery.” *-Ecumenical News International*