

# Anglican prelate plans visit to Zimbabwe

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Canterbury, England, August 30 (ENInews)--Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is planning to visit Zimbabwe in October as part of a wider trip to Africa and hopes to meet with President Robert Mugabe to discuss a brutal dispute over church properties.

Williams will be visiting Zimbabwe as well as Malawi and Zambia as part of "a pastoral visit to show support for the Anglican church there," said Marie Papworth, media director at Lambeth Palace in London, the Archbishop of Canterbury's residence and office.

Williams has requested a meeting with Mugabe, but the Zimbabwean leader's office has not responded to date, Papworth told ENInews.

The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe has been in turmoil since 2007 after renegade bishop Nolbert Kunonga, criticizing what he said were liberal attitudes toward homosexuality, tried to remove the Diocese of Harare from the Anglican Communion, the worldwide community of Anglican churches.

In 2008, Kunonga was excommunicated from the communion, but as an ally of Mugabe he and his supporters were able to seize churches and other properties. A recent court decision in Zimbabwe gave custody of Anglican properties to Kunonga, whose henchmen began harassing worshippers and evicting priests from rectories. One priest was severely beaten when he refused to leave his house, the diocese reported.

The current bishop, recognized by the Anglican Communion, is Chad Gandiya. He told the Harare Daily News that "there are parishioners being banned from church buildings by Kunonga with help of the police. They are worshipping in open spaces, under trees or booking other church buildings."

The diocese has appealed the 4 August ruling by Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku.