

National Black Church Initiative

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For immediate release
PRESS RELEASE

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NATIONAL BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE ZIMBABWE CRISIS

NBCI calls for the immediate release of the election results

Washington DC- The National Black Church Initiative believes that remaining silent on the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe is morally wrong and not acceptable. Deciding to speak out on Zimbabwe does not mean that we support or oppose the principal opposition movement, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The church supports all people of goodwill and sought to protect those who are exploited by the forces of evil.

With 80% unemployment and 100,000% inflation, we cannot and will not as men and women of God allow the silence of our voices to remain. We strongly condemn these inhumane conditions that our Zimbabwean brothers and sisters are forced to live under. We lay blame squarely at the feet of Robert Mugabe and his incompetent government. He has created an environment beyond the human sense of decency.

We also recognize that Great Britain and the United States are exeterbating present conditions through political manipulation and systematically withholding basic assistance to the people of Zimbabwe so that they can achieve their ultimate goal to remove President Robert Mugabe because of his land reform proposal. The aim of the proposal was just as pointed out in Washington Post article *Mugabe Feeds Voters' Fears With Old Anger Over Land*. (Tuesday April 8, 2008) The article states that white farmers in Zimbabwe worked black Zimbabweans in the blazing African sun for a pittance while white owners kept all of the profits. In other words, they were slaves in their own country. Mugabe's land reform if instituted justly would have even the playing field. Of course, the white farmers complained that the land was being taken without fair compensation. What they did not mention was that hundreds of years ago they brutalized Africans and took their land and never compensated them.

The western governments who come in the name of democracy sought to punish the innocent of basic food and shelter through their sanctions by defending the former white landowners. This is just another case of the rich white governments protecting the rich white landowners at the expense of the indigenous African population.

The National Black Church Initiative calls on the Zimbabwean government to respect the rule of law and basic rights to freedom of speech and assembly. The ban on demonstrations and the mounting state repression and intimidation of civil society leaders, trade unionists, and political rivals goes directly against the God given human rights and international values and norms.

NBCI condemns the surge of repression of political oppositional leaders that has led to hundreds of serious injuries and many reported deaths. We condemn the arbitrary arrests and detentions of hundreds of activists participating in peaceful protests around the country; the excessive police force against these activists during protests; and the cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and torture of these civilians in detention. It is unacceptable that peaceful protests have been met with such brutal repression by the Mugabe government, disallowing activists to engage in their basic human rights to free assembly and speech.

We are also calling for the release of the present election results and for an international schedule runoff between the two top political contenders. We are asking for both parties to respect the will of the people. We are asking for the southern African region powers, President Carter International Center for Voting Monitoring and indigenous religious organizations to monitor, count and report the final results of the Zimbabwe Presidential election to the international community.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.