



PRESS STATEMENT

CARITAS (INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT) COMMISSION

"LET JUSTICE FLOW" (Amos 5:24)

Preamble

To our public leaders and all people of good will. We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who calls us to a prophetic responsibility of promoting Justice, Human rights and the common good of the people of God.

Arising from the just ended Caritas (Integral Human Development - IHD) Commission meeting of directors of caritas from the arch/dioceses of Zambia held at Kapingila House in Lusaka, from 4th to 6th July 2024. And upon our theological reflection on the state of the nation we wish to address ourselves to the pertinent concerns facing us in Zambia.

1. THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

We have observed that the basic commodity prices in the nation are very high. Cognizant of the fact that we are in a critical economic situation as a country, our concern is that many people are suffering and the Government seems not to acknowledge the high prevalent poverty levels. Unfortunately, the Government has continued to engage itself in blame games and politicking instead of finding immediate and lasting solutions to the country's poverty situation. We urge the Government to find real and pragmatic solutions to the prevailing dire economic situation which has plunged many families in untold misery and suffering\

2. ELECTRICITY LOADSHEDING

The loadshedding of electricity begun as a measure to share equally little power among the citizens in a spirit of brotherhood. Recently in Parliament, we heard how much power is exported at the expense of the economic activities of the citizens. Improving our neighbors' economic activities over our own is unacceptable. In this regard, we appeal to the Government to immediately revoke the exportation of electricity to serve the interests of many Zambians whose businesses depend on electricity. We ask the government to consider expediting the planning and installation of solar power plants in many districts across the country.

3. UNSTABLE FUEL PRICES

We have noted with concern that the unstable fuel prices coupled with the practice of monthly pricing adjustments militates against the stability of the business environment in Zambia. Businesses are facing challenges with medium- and long-term planning on account of the flux in the fuel pricing mechanism. We are also concerned that the ever-increasing cost of fuel, will continue to cause the cost of living to be high taking into consideration the rise in transportation and production costs.

Scripture reminds us that, "The lord hears the cry of the poor" (Ps 34:7). We look up to the authorities and technocrats alike to look into the instability in the fuel pricing mechanism with a sense of priority.

4. ERODING OF NATIONAL VALUES (Articles 2,8,9,10 of the Constitution of Zambia)

Our constitution in the preamble speaks of our country as a Christian nation and calls us "to uphold the national values, principles and economic policies". We, however, bemoan the culture of disrespect from the citizens be it youth or adult especially to all those who seem to have divergent views on matters of public concern. Social media has been used as a tool to intimidate and attack all those who are not in agreement with the current policies of the government.

We ask the authorities that they should not only act when it is the president who has been abused verbally in the media but all citizens should be protected from abuse. We ask the authorities to stop all the carders who have gone to the media to insult with impunity those who hold dissenting and opposing views.

5. SHRINKING DEMOCRATIC SPACE

We note with great concern and sadness the continued shrinking of the democratic space in our nation. It is clear that the UPND Government has deliberately chosen to suppress dissenting and opposing voices. This is evidenced, inter alia, in the Government denying the opposition political parties from holding their political rallies through the misapplication of the Public Order Act. We appeal to the Government to welcome and accommodate divergent views from citizens and to open up space for dissenting voices in the public media such as ZNBC.

6. POLICE BRUTALITY

We have further observed with dissatisfaction the growing trend of police brutality in the nation at the pretext of maintaining law and order. The arbitrary arrests of citizens with dissenting and opposing voices is solely intended to intimidate citizens who stand against the Government. This abuse by the Police should not be entertained. We appeal to the Zambia Police Service to be professional and desist from acting on political instructions

from the executive, as Governments come and go. Thus, we urge the Government to be democratic and be able to apply the law with some semblance of impartiality on all citizens regardless of their political, religious, social and/or ethnic affiliation.

Of concern to us has been the conduct of police towards ecclesiastical institutions. Never before has the Zambia Police in post-independence Zambia been used to disrupt church services or Church meetings. But with the ascendance of the UPND to government, what aught to be an exception is slowly becoming the norm. The recent occurrences in Kabwe, Lusaka and Ndola, in which Zambia Police had the audacity to disrupt church services and meetings constitutes abuse of authority. It is our prayer that this government will come to its senses regarding the sacred nature of places of worship.

6.1 Case of Honorable Emmanuel J Banda

We are disturbed with the manner in which the case of the honorable member of parliament for Petauke has been handled. The information which is in the public domain on the social media in an audio recording involving Mr. Thabo Kawana PS for the Ministry of Information and his Ministry of Home Affairs counterpart Mr. Dickson Matembo is great cause for worry. The duo are heard in this audio recording urging Hon. Emmanuel J Banda to retract, deny and refute his earlier statement he gave to the Police concerning his abduction and the two specific and named individuals with close links to state House in exchange for his freedom. We demand that justice should not only be done but seen to be done on this matter.

We, therefore, urge the government officials to stop these vindictive tendencies, and that the UPND officials must desist from using the police and other instruments of state violence to doctor cases for innocent people enjoy their inalienable rights.

7. TRIBALISM AND REGIONALISM

We note with deep concern the despair that is briskly setting in our country because of the inability to find lasting solutions to people's lamentations on the ghostly manifestations of tribalism and regionalism in Zambia. We have allowed the dragon of ethnic practices and tendencies to pull us down to the point where we are passively accepting it to be our way of life. People occupying public leadership positions are not doing enough to change the trajectory of tribalism. The fear and anxiety of long-term repercussions due to these ethnic divisions is very real, especially that the examples of scotching consequences are extremely vivid within the region and beyond.

No one is born hating another person. People only learn how to hate, and similarly they can also learn how to love. Christ commands us to love one another. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved" (Jn15:12). Imbued by this Gospel command, we are therefore calling on all public leaders to stop pretending that the problem is not serious. Let us urgently nip the problem in the bud before it

astronomically escalates. In total sobriety and humility, let us work towards creating space and environment in Zambia that is free of hate and stereotyping, vulgarism and profanity, nepotism and discrimination, unfair and unjust distribution of wealth and opportunities to all.

8.LEGAL LAWLESSNESS

The culture and tradition of 'fishing' pieces of legislation for the purposes of sanitizing the illegalities and wrong doings is on an alarming pace of increase. We have observed with total disenchantment and displeasure at the manner the law enforcement institutions are using the law to accuse people selectively, and sometimes people who are innocent just because their conscience and position of belief is not in tandem with those in positions of power. Through dishonest and arbitrary determination to manufacture conditions for detaining people, the law enforcement officers are now regularly seen to be at liberty to determine with impunity whatever charge they apportion on someone, including the retroactive application of the law.

8.1 Expulsion of Nine (9) Opposition Members from Parliament

The recent case of expulsion of the nine (9) PF Members of Parliament from the National Assembly by the Second Deputy Speaker, Hon Moses Moyo, MP., is clear evidence of legal lawlessness. The said Second Deputy Speaker's actions are a travesty on the country's democratic trajectory. Sadly, this act of duress on the legislature by the executive will reverse the democratic gains that the country was steadily making. That the concupisense between the executive, legislature and judiciary militates against the norm of separation of government. That the feverish speed with which the nine (9) opposition members of parliament were expelled is a brazen violation of procedural standing orders of the house. That the remote-type instruction to the Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament to expel the nine (9) PF Members of Parliament constitutes an abuse of authority. Never before in the history of this country has parliament been involved in handling the internal affairs of a political party. Further, with the current fiscal challenges that the country is facing, the government has the ill-will to willfully cause nine bye elections if not ten in due course! We urge the executive and legislature to be reasonable and level headed on this matter. This culture of impunity and utter disregard to the laws of the land must be held in check.

We are calling on all the institutions mandated with the duty and responsibility of ensuring justice and fairness to the people, to operate with integrity and goodness. As scripture tells us, "Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Mt. 26:41-42). We are therefore, keen to see that the Human Rights Commission is defending human rights, we are anxious to see that the Anti-Corruption Commission and Drug Enforcement Commission are dismantling without duress and fear the windmill of corruption in totality, we are impatient to see the Judiciary

which is rich in compassion and justice, and lastly, we are yearning for a Police Service that objects to the selective application of the law but embodies fairness, firmness and justice.

9.CONCLUSION

As members of Caritas (IHD) Commission, we are hopeful that the matters raised will be considered with an open mind by the powers that be. Ours remain purely a duty of being a voice and conscience of society. May God bless Zambia.



Most. Rev. Dr. Alick Banda.
IHD Commission Chairperson



Fr. Dr. Gabriel Mapulanga
IHD Commission Secretary

Fr. Evaristo Kabungo	Archdiocese of Lusaka
Fr. Leonard Kalyoti	Archdiocese of Kasama
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