



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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June 9, 2008

Most Reverend Archbishop Buti Tlhagale
President
Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
Khanya House
140 Visagie Street
P.O. Box 941
Pretoria, 0001
South Africa

Dear Archbishop Buti,

At this time of political and economic turmoil and suffering for the people of Zimbabwe, I write to express the solidarity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops with the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. Your media statement is a powerful testimony to your courageous solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe who face a deteriorating human rights situation.

The USCCB has followed the events over the past month and shares your deep concerns over the incidents of torture, humiliation and abduction. We are troubled by the oppressive conditions under which the people of Zimbabwe have been living and remain concerned that the political situation in Zimbabwe in the run up to June 27 elections could lead to even greater violations of fundamental human rights.

Our Conference is grateful for the recent visit that you and Cardinal Wilfrid Napier made to Zimbabwe. We support your call to all political party leaders to calm their supporters and end the use of violence and intimidation. We share your view that the violence must end if the June 27 run off election is to be free and fair. We agree that international election observers be deployed to assess both the remote and the immediate preparations for the election. The Government of Zimbabwe and all Zimbabweans need to work to end the violence and preserve the human dignity of all people regardless of their political affiliations.

We express our profound respect for your efforts and for those of all men and women of good will who are the voices of peace and compassion in the region. May the Prince of Peace bless the people of Zimbabwe and heal their wounds and may God bless you in your ministry as teachers and shepherds as you faithfully proclaim the Gospel and seek to guide the Southern African Conference into a future of peace through reconciliation.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink. The signature consists of a large, stylized 'T' followed by the name 'Thomas Wenski' written in a cursive script.

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Cc: Most Reverend James Patrick Green, Papal Nuncio