

# Statement on Mbare Violence by Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace



AFRICA SYNOD HOUSE  
29-31 Selous Ave/Cnr. 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

## **A Plea To Politicians: Respect Human Rights and Dignity for Mbare Residents**

*Statement on Mbare Violence by Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe*

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) is appealing to political parties and politicians as well as the youths to stop violence and respect human rights and human dignity of the people who live in Mbare. Violence in Mbare, since the beginning of this year is largely political. The organising points have been Carter House and Paget House in Mbare. This area is close to a place where some people, especially those who are HIV positive, collect their anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs). But the place has become so unapproachable and inhospitable that some of the victims of violence are now afraid to go and collect their drugs. Systematic about the violence is that it is imported; most people behind the violence are not permanent residents in the area, but have been 'shipped' from other areas.

The Commission believes that diversity is a positive value that can be used for the betterment of the country, but it seems we are destroying that diversity and forcing people to follow certain political positions. The victims of violence say they are being punished for their democratic rights of participating in political associations of their choice. But our experience has shown that politicians will never win votes by beating and killing their perceived opponents. The best way of winning votes is by promoting human rights and human dignity. How, for example, can a person (and his family, relatives etc.) who dislocated his jaw as a result of political violence would vote for the political party responsible for dislocating it?

Usually, a family house is the safest place where an individual can seek refuge. But in Mbare, there are politically related groups that force their way into private property of those with alternative political mindsets, confiscating household goods and other personal property. In extreme cases, some families in Mbare supporting a particular political position have lost their houses to people who belong to other political parties. Buying and (re)selling opportunities, some of the most forms of survival strategies in Mbare have been availed on partisan basis. Vending positions, flea market tables have also been politicised. All this is happening amidst tense, but implicit political violence. Families have been broken by the violence, and some men have to go and see their families at night to avoid being caught by the politically dogmatic groups. Is this the freedom that claimed gallant daughters and sons of the soil during the liberation struggle?

However, all these scenarios do not only undermine the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government and guaranteeing to everyone the right that are essential for effective political participation - but are also against the Gospel values and principles which the Church follows. They undermine the principle of the Common Good which requires that political, economic and the social order should 'allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to make independent choices to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily'.

The political violence in Mbare also undermines the principle of human dignity, the human worthiness that we derive from God who loved us first and created us in his own image. It is instructive to consider every 'neighbour without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity'. Every political, economic, social, scientific and cultural programme must be inspired by the awareness of the primacy of each human being over society. CCJPZ therefore advises the politicians, political parties and the youths to desist from violence in Mbare to enable citizens to live their normal lives. END! 30 June 2011

A.M Chaumba, National Director.