



South African Council of Churches

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For Media Release 5 August 2013

The National Executive Committee of the South African Council Churches met on 31st July and 1st August 2013 at Khotso House. The meeting deliberated on many issues that affect the people of South Africa at this time. We had a very progressive and successful meeting around the life and witness of the Church in South Africa.

The Council of Churches congratulates the people of Zimbabwe for conducting a peaceful election on the 31st July 2013. Although there have been reported incidences of intimidation and violence and some logistical challenges, the overall feedback is that the elections have been fairly peaceful. We implore the different political parties in Zimbabwe to continue to preach peace, nation building and hope for the people. Further the SACC calls on the political parties to continue to play fair and to respect the will of the people that will emerge from the results of the election. We pledge to continue to uphold the people of Zimbabwe in our prayers.

The SACC, in light of the upcoming anniversary of the Marikana massacre on 16th August, reflected on developments relating to events following the incident. We are concerned that tensions and violence continue to be a reality in Marikana. We therefore call on the government not to be partisan, and for the unions (AMCUR and NUM) to observe the peace agreement between them and redirect their efforts at collectively engaging the employer in order to improve the working conditions and interest of the workers. We all have to recognize that we are in this situation because of an exploitative mining industry that marginalizes the workers and the people of Southern Africa. We have an economic system that is not sustainable, which results in the flight of finance outside the country. We therefore call on the unions to commemorate the massacre together and work together and not against each other as this militates against the interest of the workers. We believe that in working together they will strengthen the cause of the workers which is ultimately the purpose of labour unions in the first place.

The SACC NEC is supportive of the work being done by the Farlan commission. However, we are shocked and disappointed that public funds are used to finance some parties and excluding the victims of the massacre. We thus support the constitutional appeal for legal support in this regard. We call on the government to financially support all the expenses of the commission hearings so that all can have access to it and not be denied the right to share their stories. It is important that this issue be treated with the necessary sensitivity because this is a matter that could either build or break our nation since justice is a vital component of reconciliation and healing. We have to show compassion and empathy to the victims of the Marikana massacre and not further victimize them by making the hearings inaccessible. We call on the churches in the Platinum belt to show a ministry of accompaniment and presence in Marikana. The SACC will set up a team of church leaders in order to lead a process of accompaniment for the unions and people to continue the work of peace – building in Marikana.

The SACC also discussed the state of health of the father of the nation, Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. We call on the nation to continue to pray for him and to support his family. We call on the nation, especially the churches and the media, to give the family space as they care for Tata at this time. The SACC has set up a Task Force to support the family and the government in caring for Tata during this time.

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