

National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD)

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Church Leaders commend Zuma but call for concrete action in Zimbabwe

Church leaders meeting in Gauteng on the 15th of April commended President Jacob Zuma on the stronger stance that he, as the mediator in the Zimbabwe crisis, seems to have taken in the last couple of months.

Meeting to discuss issues beleaguering the nation and the region, the leaders urged however, that President Zuma's visibly stronger commitment to resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe be turned into concrete action in dealing with crises in the region.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit and keenly aware of the ethical and moral responsibility placed on them, the leaders discussed issues around unity within the ecumenical and inter-faith movement. They spoke strongly against the co-optation of religious leaders by political leaders for nefarious reasons.

Speaking at the think tank meeting, Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of the Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg stated "There is a pressing and urgent need to stand firmly side by side, face to face as we jointly seek to promote unity among the diverse religious leaders and by the same token resist division."

He strongly condemned religious leaders who, rather than speaking to power, prefer to be on the side of power.

"We need a 'gloves off' conversation not only with political leaders but also about our identity, our collective voice and our role in a changing and developing society", declared Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba.

The leaders discussed the need for Inter-faith dialogue on the shared moral values and virtues held in high esteem in each religious tradition. They questioned the ethical foundations /principles upon which our economic and political policies are based.

"Economic and political decisions have far reaching moral consequences which affect both the law-makers and the majority of the citizens. If we are to serve our communities and nation well, it is mandatory that ethical-moral questions be continually raised in order to foster the common good," stated Rev Ivan Abrahams, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

It was the shared view of the church leaders, that as good as the South African constitution is, the human rights enshrined therein do not offer a solid unassailable foundation for morality..

The leaders urged voters going to the polls in May to vote for truly moral leaders; leaders who are committed to alleviating the pain and suffering of people, the unemployed, the homeless, the poor and refugee; leaders who are not corrupt and avoid personal self-enrichment.

"If the well-being of the ordinary citizen comes first, then it is not unreasonable to openly ask government to trim its bloated lifestyle; it is not unreasonable for religious leaders to campaign publicly for the virtues of prudence, courage, justice, and moderation," declared His Eminence, Wilfrid, Cardinal Napier of the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban.

Participants

His Eminence Wilfred Napier, Cardinal Napier of the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban.

Rev Ivan Abrahams, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Dr. Thabo Makgoba

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of the Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg

The Most Revd L.L.M. kaSiboto, Presiding Bishop, Ethiopian Church

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