

# RECLAIMING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE: ZCC PASTORAL STATEMENT ON THE MURDER OF MOREBLESSING ALI

13 JUNE 2022

1. The nation has seen an increase in cases of murder and loss of lives of Zimbabweans in cold blood in the first half of this year. On the 27th of February 2022, Mboneni Ncube, aged 35, was killed at a political rally in Kwekwe. In March 2022, police reported having arrested Bright Zhantali, aged 30, believed to have killed the eighth woman in Macheke and possibly related to the other unsolved murders in Rusape, Mutare and Nyanga. On the 29th of April 2022, the Herald reported that police had found “two bodies of men, believed to have been murdered, dumped in a pit near some school grounds in Binga” while four touts were arrested “for killing a passenger in Mbare.” In May a man from Pelandaba suburb, Mchimi Lunga, aged 30, was in court accused of killing his wife Nicolah Mabvure (22) over claims of infidelity. A few days ago, Langelihle Dube of Bulawayo is said to have been killed and his wife robbed. On the 11th of June, the nation woke up to a report of a callous and cruel murder of Moreblessing Ali, who had been reported missing more than a week ago.

2. The brutality of the killing of Moreblessing Ali indicates a level of hatred that is very disturbing. It confirms what Jesus taught in that it is not only the physical act of murder that God judges, but the condition of the heart (Matthew 5:21-22). The church is deeply concerned about the level of hate and the hate speech that has developed in our nation that forms a reservoir out of which these terrible killings emerge.

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3. The nation's conscience needs to be reawakened to the fact that killing any human being is not acceptable, whatever the reasons may be. The church wishes to call upon the nation to renew its commitment to respect the dignity of all human life. The nation needs to establish a culture in which disputes are resolved through non-violent means and where tolerance and coexistence characterize how citizens live with differences.

4. What should worry all of us is that the more frequent the cases of murder, the more murder and shedding of blood becomes normalized. The nation acquires a bad name where lives of individuals are not valued through the normalization of murder.

5. Killing any human being in cold blood runs contrary to all our cultures, our shared national values, and our religious faiths. In our African cultures, the killing of an innocent person leaves a curse on the person responsible, his or her family as well as defiling the whole nation.

6. In the Christian tradition and in other faiths, human beings are created in the image of God and are endowed with sanctity and dignity. One manifestation of corruption after the fall of humanity was the shedding of innocent blood. When Cain killed his brother Abel, God said to him, "What have you done? Listen, your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand" (Genesis 4:10-11).

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7. While in some cases the identity of the perpetrator or perpetrators remains unresolved, God still asks that accountability question, “Where is your brother? Your sister?” The church calls upon all those whose guilt of bloodshed, to seek restoration, repentance and stop their sin.

8. Although not all the murders are politically motivated, the church worries that there are so many murders just some few months before a potentially violent 2023 election environment. The church calls upon the government, political parties, and community leaders at all levels of society to desist from instigating violence in their public or private utterances but rather to promote peace and tolerance among their constituencies.

9. The church prays for God’s comfort to family of Moreblessing Ali and all the other families that have lost loved ones through killings. We pray that they may find justice and healing.

10. The church pleads with the Zimbabwe Republic Police to handle cases of human disappearances, distress calls and cases of violent conflict with a sense of urgency and in ways that do not compromise the dignity of victims.

11. The church also calls upon the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission and other peace-building organizations to upscale their work across different sectors of society towards the establishment of a new culture of non-violence.

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12. The church invites all state and non-state institutions and citizens towards a renewed sense of the dignity of all persons. We call for a new national commitment that no one should spill the blood of a fellow Zimbabwean. The church is calling on the nation to reclaim the sanctity of all human lives.

13. The church repents for its indifference and lukewarm approach in addressing the history of shedding of blood in our nation. By failing to express its moral outrage regarding loss of lives, the church has passively condoned this sin by omission and has contributed to the blunting of the national conscience. The church is reminded that “He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 17:15).

14. Lastly, the church commits itself to working with all Zimbabweans of good will to promote peaceful resolution of conflict, cultivate a culture of tolerance and coexistence and work towards the eradication of all forms of violent crime. We do so in remembrance of the words of Jesus that say, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).