

Service in support of Zimbabwean victims of torture – 26th June 2011

Written by Administrator

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The London chapel of John Wesley – one of the founders of the Methodist Church – resounded to the sound of drums and African singing and dancing as exiled Zimbabweans and supporters gathered on 26th June to mark the UN international day in support of victims of torture.

The Vigil supplied the choir and drummers, who were energized by management team member, Patson Muzuwa, himself a survivor of torture.

The service was organised by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and our host at the Methodist world's 'cathedral' was the Reverend Jennifer Potter who has ministered in Botswana and Zambia and is Methodist 'companion' for Zimbabwe, visiting there every year. Jennifer prayed for a new dawn in Zimbabwe and reached out to Anglican friends in Zimbabwe who, she said, seemed to be particularly persecuted.

The service was addressed by two visitors from Zimbabwe: Irene Petras, Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and Kudakwashe Chitsike of the Research and Advocacy Unit (Zimbabwe). Kudakwashe said women were particularly affected by violence in Zimbabwe – especially during elections and in rural areas. Nevertheless a recent survey had shown that they would prefer elections rather than continue with the current government. She added that the situation had corrupted people so much that 9% of respondents to the survey said that violence should be part of elections.

For her part, Irene condemned the prevalence of torture in Zimbabwe despite the government's agreement that it would be ended. The organ of national healing had failed and the rule of law had been so degraded that victims of crimes were arrested instead of the perpetrators. She said what was necessary was to bring in professionals to reform the police and the prosecuting authority. As it was, a whole generation had lost faith in justice. Zimbabweans must speak out about it or be complicit, and perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The service ended with Husani Husani reading his poem 'I stand accused'.

I stand accused
For asking for my rights

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For exercising my right to live
For choosing the party of my choice
For choosing which leader to lead my country
I stand accused

I stand accused
For demanding proper health care
For demanding better education
For demanding freedom of speech
For demanding freedom of association
I stand accused

I stand accused
For belonging to a political party of my choice
For being ungrateful to war mongers posing as war veterans
For asking how a state minister becomes a millionaire overnight
For asking why some people are above the law
I stand accused

Thanks to Josie Zhuga who led the choir and to the other choir members: Priscillah Chakanyuka, Melinda Chikanya, Handsen Chikowore, Fundai Chiname, Hasani Hasani, Epiphania Kamuruko, Jonathan Kariwoh, Shamiso Kofi, Fungayi Mabhunu, Petronilla Masango, Wilbert Matambanadzo, Gladys Hellen Meck, Nqobizitha Moyo, Alfred Moyo, Liona Moyo, Mercy Muranganwa, Penelope Musemburi, Sakhile Ncube, Pauline Nyikadzino, Luka Phiri, Elizabeth Puwai, Margret Tandi.

For pictures of the event, check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwewigil/> .