



JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THREE CHURCH MOTHER BODIES ON THE ARREST AND DETENTION OF FAITH LEADERS AND THE CTPD STAFF IN NDOLA

1. Preamble

We, the leaders of the three Church Mother bodies namely the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Our Prophetic Voice

We have always maintained that our prophetic voice on national issues is solely motivated by our wish to see a unified, prosperous and just society where citizens live in peace with the Lord, with one another and with creation. Our prophetic voice is also motivated by our wish to build a nation in which citizens are guaranteed the exercise of their God-given rights of expression, association and religion and can thus meet and freely discuss issues of national importance without hinderous.

3. The Uncalled for Conduct by the Police and the Need to Respect the Sanctity of the Church Space

We wish to register our extreme disappointment and concern at the recent action by the police to prevent citizens from exercising their constitutional right to meet and discuss national issues affecting the society in which they live. This is in the wake of the incidence which apparently occurred on Friday, 19th October 2018 in Ndola where the Centre for Trade and Policy Development (CTPD) held a training workshop at the Ndola Baptist Church in view of reviewing and identifying the impact of the 2019 national budget, Zambia's national debt and the reported illicit financial flows. We have been informed that while the workshop was being conducted **inside a Church building**, police came in full riot gear and demanded for an end to the workshop before they proceeded to arrest three (3) CTPD staff and five (5) pastors, locked them up in police cells and we are told that they later

charged with unlawful assembly with intent to commit crime. The arrested citizens were only released on police bond after they presented working sureties.

We, the Church Mother Bodies would like to condemn in strongest terms possible the conduct of the police who seem to have unfortunately developed a habit of ambushing unarmed and defenceless citizens as well as making arbitrary arrests and detentions. **It is worrisome to note that the propensity of police brutality has now crossed boundaries and can be done in religious buildings which for a very long time have been regarded as sacred places. The Church is a place of refuge for the vulnerable and weak in society.** We call upon the police to desist from such behaviour that violates not only the sacred spaces but people's rights as well. Instead, we expect them to demonstrate high levels of respect and reverence when they standing on sacred grounds. The action by our police in this saga was not only detrimental to freedom of assembly and speech but also sacrilege and detestable in the eyes of God. It is indeed shameful to have these arrests conducted a day after **Prayer, Fasting and Reconciliation**.

We, further, call upon the Zambia Police Command in the country to be professional and operate above board to the satisfaction of all citizens regardless of their political affiliation, tribe, race or religion. The Police service must also operate above board by ensuring that there is freedom of assembly, speech and religion as enshrined in the laws of the land.

We also call upon relevant authorities to review and amend the Public Order Act which has remained archaic from the days of colonialism. The biased application of the POA to stifle the lawful activities of the Civil Society Organisations and of the Church is unfortunate and is already contributing towards the shrinking of the democratic space in the country.

We demand that government expedites the process of reviewing the POA and its manner of application so as to maintain peace and order in the nation while respecting the constitutional rights and order.

To our political leaders, especially those in power, we urge you to exercise power with restraint and work towards inculcating the tenets and cardinal values of democracy and good governance.

4. Conclusion

We, the three Church Mother Bodies, will not relent in advocating for social justice and speaking for the voiceless in our beloved country. We will continue to defend the freedom of expression and assembly. We will also continue to fight for a just society where independence means more than just political freedom. We will continue to fight for the independence that is extended to the church, civil society and the common woman and man on the street. Lastly, the Church will continue to preach tolerance, love, peace, and national unity.

May God Bless Zambia

Signed



Bishop George C.Z. Lungu
(ZCCB President)

Bishop Sydney Sichilima
(CCZ PRESIDENT)

Bishop Paul Mususu
(BOARD CHAIRPERSON- EFZ)