NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

South African churches ask world not to recognize Mugabe presidency

Bronwen Dachs Catholic News Service | Jul. 2, 2008

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (CNS) -- The South African Council of Churches has called on the international community not to recognize the presidency of Zimbabwe's longtime ruler, Robert Mugabe, who was sworn in for a sixth term after a runoff election in which he was the only candidate.

The June 27 election was "neither free nor fair, therefore this presidency is illegitimate," the council said in a statement released June 30 by general secretary Eddie Makue in Johannesburg.

"We call on African and other states of the world not to recognize the de facto presidency" of Mugabe, the council said.

The council, of which the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference is a member, also called for sanctions against Zimbabwe.

"While we recognize that further sanctions will hurt the poor and suffering Zimbabweans, we have come to the conclusion that the people of Zimbabwe are already burdened with untold suffering," the council said. "The time has come for all states to apply and intensify universal sanctions against Zimbabwe as part and parcel of the negotiations for power-sharing in Zimbabwe."

Zimbabwe is currently subject to limited sanctions, including travel bans on about 100 ruling party officials and restrictions on arms importation.

U.S. President George W. Bush has said the United States will press for strong action by the United Nations, including an arms embargo and travel ban on government officials.

The council of churches called on regional blocs, the Southern African Development Community and the African Union, "to redouble their efforts toward the formation of (a) transitional government" in which Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change will share power.

A transitional government should "bring an immediate end to the violence and human rights violations while it negotiates a more stable long-term socioeconomic and political situation" in Zimbabwe, the council said.

The council also deplored the violence that took place in the weeks leading up to the election, noting that it sent a "dossier of alleged atrocities" committed by Zimbabwean authorities to South African President Thabo Mbeki.

Mbeki, who was appointed by the Southern African Development Community to open talks between ZANU-PF and the opposition, sent a team of South African generals to Zimbabwe in May to probe the political violence. Mbeki "indicated that action has been taken by the team of generals to stop the violence," the council said.

Source URL (retrieved on *02/14/2016 - 11:46*): http://ncronline.org/news/south-african-churches-ask-world-not-recognize-mugabe-presidency