

Correspondence between the Vigil and Lambeth Palace

Written by Administrator

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Email to the Vigil from Helen Stawski, Archbishop of Canterbury's Deputy Secretary for International Development, Lambeth Palace

2nd November 2011

Thank you for your email to the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding his recent visit to Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, and many apologies for the delay in replying. As you will appreciate, the Archbishop's post-bag is substantial, and he very much regrets not being able to reply personally to every item of correspondence, much as he might wish it. He has therefore asked me to write to you on his behalf.

During his visit, the Archbishop was able to engage directly with the local Church in the countries he travelled to, and this was felt to be deeply significant and encouraging for all concerned. In particular, in Zimbabwe the Archbishop was able to meet with clergy and Church members in two of the dioceses where congregations have suffered harassment and persecution at the hands of the Zimbabwean police. Archbishop Rowan met the President of Zimbabwe and was able to raise these issues with him. I attach a copy of a statement issued by the Archbishop together with the Archbishops of the Provinces of Central Africa, Southern Africa and Tanzania, and the Zimbabwean bishops following that meeting.

The Archbishop was conscious throughout the visit of the support and prayer of very many people, and he has asked me to convey to you his deep and sincere gratitude for your own support.

The situation in Zimbabwe is one which the Archbishop continues to follow assiduously, and we remain in close and regular contact with the bishops and dioceses of the Anglican Church there. Since the Archbishop's visit, there have already been some encouraging developments in terms of favourable court rulings, although the situation remains worrying.

Thank you once again for writing, and for your own continuing dedication to these matters. It is vital that we keep the Church and people in Zimbabwe at the forefront of our prayer and practical action at this time.

**Open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury from the Zimbabwe Vigil
12th September 2011**

Dear Dr Williams

The Zimbabwe Vigil welcomes your planned visit to Zimbabwe next month in support of besieged Anglicans under the rod of the unelected president Mugabe.

We have been bearing witness outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London every Saturday for nine years against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. Most of us are Christians, many Anglicans.

The persecution of Anglicans in Zimbabwe has continued too long with little condemnation from the Christian community at large. Even brother churches in Zimbabwe have scurried from the crucifixion.

The Vigil is disappointed that Mugabe has been consistently received with honour by the Vatican when he has gone to Rome on his shopping trips.

We disagree with those who question the wisdom of your visit. We are encouraged that you share our pain, though we have no doubt that Mugabe will seek to use your visit for propaganda purposes.

We do not believe his regime – steeped in lawlessness, terror and greed – will make any meaningful concessions at your request. But we pray that your visit will highlight to the world the plight of our suffering brothers and sisters at home.