



CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN ZIMBABWE (CCJPZ)

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Let Us Save the Children from Ritual Murders

1.0 Introduction

Zimbabwe has experienced wide spread reports of ritual murders in the past months. The nature of these rituals, involves the removal of some of the body parts from the victims, for ritual purposes. The targeted groups to these cruel activities have been the innocent children who are ruthlessly abducted and murdered and have their body parts removed and sold within and outside Zimbabwe. In his address during the 21 May 2021 National Cultural Commemoration Day, Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa condemned the killings, which seem to be ritualistic saying that such criminal acts have no place in the country. President Mnangagwa added that the State values human life, unity, peace and tolerance, describing these as values that are essential for national development.

In this misery, together with the families of the murdered children, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) invites all the faithful and people of good will, to reflect on the pains and sorrows experienced by the parents whose children were murdered by Herod when he sent his men to kill the Children in Bethlehem. *“In Ramah a voice was heard, crying and weeping loudly. Rachel was mourning for her children and she refused to be comforted because they were dead”* (Mt.2:16 -18). It was a painful experience, losing defenceless and innocent children through the sword and due to the greed of the leader, who should have been a protector to these. In today's world, the doctrine of human rights and the sanctity of life, together with the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, bring to an end the rituals that tend to end the lives of individuals and human sacrifices. In fact, one who ends the life of an individual, must account for this in the courts of law.

CCJPZ understands that beliefs in witches, have caused deaths or downfall of many prominent business people. In consulting witches, they end up doing criminal activities that later lead them into prison. Due to many challenges in life, for example, searching for pregnancy, a job or success in life, one at consulting a witch can be asked to provide body parts or blood of a child for befitting sacrifice. Others in trying to maintain influential positions in the society, perform some rituals which mostly need the blood or other particular human body parts like fats, the heart or liver. To obtain these, someone has to be killed and the soft targets are young children. The trauma this brings to the victim's family, the community and the nation at large, is immense.

The word of God in Leviticus (18:21-30) says that, *“Do not sacrifice your children on the altar fires to the god Molech. I am the Lord your God, and that would disgrace me... ..and I forbid you to follow their sickening way”*. Such practices of offering children, are henceforth pronounced filthy by God, they instead bring misery to those who practice them. The biggest curse today is life imprisonment and separation from one's beloved for life once arrested.

2.0 Way forward/Recommendations

- As CCJPZ, we join the nation in condemning such practices, and ask the people of God to value the sanctity of life and be guided by the Word of God and the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Article 48 which states that “*Every person has the right to life.*” These ritual murders, deprive the young people especially children, of their God given right to life.
- We also call on all stakeholders, formal and informal, to work towards the protection of children and the eradication of such practises.
- The quest for prosperity and healing should be sought through legitimate means, which often involve hard work.
- Parents and the ministry of education, to provide children with necessary security measures as they leave home to schools and back. Children should be advised not to use private cars for transport.
- In quoting one of the latest poems by another child on social media trying to urge the nation to know that Children are a gift from God, to be protected by the whole community, the child stated the proverb, “*Chirere, chigokurerawo*”. We urge communities to be at their highest levels of alertness, and they should promptly report any suspicious person or potential dangers, threatening, the security of their children.
- The Government of Zimbabwe to declare this as a state of emergency where everyone is to make sure that children are not left unattended.
- As a security measure, all spirit mediums should be registered with the government and any institution that risks the lives of children should be banned.
- Children should be educated in some of the important protocols and issues that pertain to their rights. They should be taught how to report on the behaviour of the elders that threatens their lives.
- The judiciary to expeditiously deal with such cases and make sure that justice is done to the families and bring healing in compliance with **Articles 69 and 70** of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the African Charter, on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and especially **Article 16** of which Zimbabwe ratified.

3.0 Conclusion

CCJPZ therefore, condemns the practice of ritual murders and any forms of child abuse, trafficking and selling of human body parts. We only believe that it is through the redemptive action of Christ on the cross, and not through shedding the blood of the innocent young children, that people are saved. Success is an attitude and it is achieved through hardworking. As individuals and the nation as a whole, we should join hands in saving the lives of our children and not allow any child to perish, just to satisfy a greedy and idle mind of an individual. Let us work towards ending this practice and save the children from these ritualists.

Paul Muchena (CCJPZ National Coordinator)