



**EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI**  
I pray that they will all be one » John 17:21

## **COMMUNIQUE: HEADS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA EVANGELICAL ALLIANCES ON THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM ON MISSIONS**

We, Heads of Southern African Evangelical Churches, members of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa in collaboration with African Services;

Having participated in the Southern African Evangelical Churches Consultation on the **Impact of Religious Extremism on Missions**, held in Lilongwe Malawi from January 25-27, 2022;

After deliberating on the following sub-themes:

- Why radicalization and extremism are on the rise in Southern Africa.
- Identifying trends of growing extremism in the Southern region.
- Create an awareness of the growth of religious extremism in Africa and in particular Southern Africa and its impact on the proclamation of the Gospel.
- Acknowledging the challenges we face in countering religious extremism and identifying what needs to be done.
- Draft a response and action plan to curtail the spread of radicalisation and religious extremism.

**CONSCIOUS** that our beloved continent is experiencing an increase in religious extremism, most recently in Southern Africa. The Church in some communities has often been targeted and this has curtailed the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel and our evangelical expressions.

**AFFIRM** Our theological rationale for an alternative narrative to counter religious extremism is hinged on (3) three theological tenets. The first is a life of dignity rooted in our common humanity as people created in the image and likeness of God albeit with a fallen nature. The second tenet is the significance of Jesus the Christ in modelling for us how to live differently and enabling that alternative existence by overcoming the power of sin and sanctifying us to be the people God wants us to be. And finally, the significance of the church as the place of formation of God's people to be the people witnessing an alternative reality in the world.

**COGNISANT** of the role played by Heads of States and Governments in the SADC region to prevent growing cases of religious extremism. We further acknowledge that the Head of

SADC. H.E. Dr Lazarus Chakwera has been instrumental in advancing the cause of peace, stability, and interfaith harmony in the region.

**CONCERNED** about the systematic targeting of Churches in Southern African countries with some specific country reports highlighting little to no action from both local and national authorities. We view these attacks as an affront to our religious liberties and represent modern-day Persecution of Christians in the SADC.

**OBSERVED** that some states in the region have weak security systems and structures coupled with challenges of poverty, youth vulnerabilities, and other socio-economic issues that tend to give way to the ideology of radicalism.

**CONCERNED** that:

- Humanitarian aid, due to increased poverty in the region and worsened by the COVID 19 pandemic has led to the advancement of extremist ideologies in the South.
- Weak education systems have also contributed to radical ideology with scholarships being offered abroad that tend to radicalise our youth.
- The youth remain the most vulnerable group for extremists, and research indicates unemployment and materialism allure the youth to these groups.
- Integral mission which advances both the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel in our Churches in Southern Africa has not been mainstreamed in our strategic plans and mission.
- The dearth of sound leadership both within the Church and the State is a critical gap extremists use to infiltrate our communities.
- The awareness of the rise of religious extremism remains low.

**RESOLVE** to:

- Create awareness of emerging issues around Religious Extremism in our Churches through workshops, forums, conferences and sermons.
- Have closer networking as the evangelical fraternity in SADC and build the resource base for missions in Southern Africa through our churches by creating awareness for self-reliance in the alliances to break the dependence syndrome on the west.
- Advocate and lobby to influence policy on social and economic issues in our nations by developing the capacity of leaders within the Church to be able to influence State leadership.
- Create discipleship programs focusing on children to affirm and educate them on their Christian identity and involve them in church programs and activities. An action plan is to develop a children's desk in all our alliances to ensure we "win the future". Christian parents and pastors need to affirm the role of children in church services and leadership for sustainability of our communities.

- Develop and establish standards for sound leadership coupled with governance and accountability structures nationally to enhance transparency in our alliances.
- Church through community mobilization should develop projects that promote community transformation.
- Education: to build and improve the quality of theological education in our nations by equipping schools with rich curricula for the study of world religions; in addition enhance formal and informal programs within the church.
- Set-up commissions that deal with integral missions in alliances. Demonstrate the gospel by carrying out interventions to meet the humanitarian needs of our community.
- Work with other para-church organizations and research institutes to track incidents and trace trends of religious extremism in member countries.
- Review and change strategies for integral mission that have not worked in the past.
- Create a fund through a deliberate resource mobilization strategy and economic entrepreneurship both at AEA and national alliances that will promote integral missions through investments/wealth creation communities to boost the economic situations in our midst.

**REAFFIRM** our commitment to:

- Promote the unity of Christians in order to have a strong voice, hence creating a tolerant community.

WHILE there could be reasons that causes extremism we invite all to the love and saving knowledge of Christ which is the solution to all human needs.

**CONSEQUENTLY,** we commit to advancing our African Evangelical Metanarratives to counter religious extremism of:

- Hope which is a counter-narrative to extremist and radical assertions. The youth have been made to believe that they are hopeless, and the solution is extreme behaviours of terrorism. This message must be debunked. Those in Christ are not hopeless. We have a living hope in Christ.
- Love which is another counter-narrative to extremism and radicalization. Many do believe that the message and practice of love go a long way to challenge extremist ideas. Again, loving our neighbour is precedent by loving God first. The Great Commandment requires us to love God first and then to love your neighbour as you love self.

Advancing the Christian narrative that teaches that we use our freedom to serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13). Extremism requires the youths to use their freedom for selfish gains,

We, Southern Africa Evangelical leaders have adopted this communiqué and are committed to continuing to work together to stem and curb the rise of religious extremism in our respective countries.

***Drafted in Lilongwe, Malawi January 27, 2022***