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# Send Zimbabwe our gift of freedom

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Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu appeals for peace,  
in a speech delivered at UCT and edited by Adrian Hadland

I have a nostalgia for the bad old days of apartheid when we were united against a common adversary. Remember how we were so idealistic and even enthusiastic?

People really believed that they were in the struggle not for what they could get out of it. We were fantastic. You were fantastic. Ours was a glorious struggle.

One misses those days when we swallowed so much teargas. Sometimes I even miss some of the vicious Tutu stories they used to tell then.

In one, I went to heaven and knocked on the pearly gates. St Peter told me I had to go to the warmer place. A few weeks later, the devil knocked on the pearly gates. Said the devil: "Please take Tutu back. He's causing too much trouble down in Hell."

We are going through a rough patch.

Who could have imagined that we would see those distressing things when xenophobic violence broke out against our sisters and brothers from other parts of Africa?

It was so shattering.

We, the new South Africa. We who had been the flavour of the month, internationally, for our rela-



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tively peaceful transition from oppression to democracy; we who gave the world that extraordinary icon of forgiveness and reconciliation so rightly feted by the world, most recently in Hyde Park, Nelson Mandela.

We who gave the world a much-admired paradigm for dealing with post-conflict situations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

How could what happened, happen?

I know we are all hanging our heads in shame. May I, on behalf of all South Africans, apologise to our sisters and brothers for what we did to them, we who were welcomed so warmly by them, by the people we have treated so abominably.

Thank God that we redeemed ourselves by our wonderfully generous response to that crisis, by opening our homes and providing support and help to the victims of the violence.

Those who supported us so pas-

sionately assumed that, come our liberation, we in South Africa would always be on the side of the angels in any of the crises and issues of the world.

I swell with pride to see our South African peacekeepers working on the continent.

But I have to say that we have appalled and disappointed our friends by the way we have voted in the United Nations Security Council, supporting China and Russia regarding Burma and Zimbabwe.

Can you believe we opposed a comprehensive ban on cluster bombs? And now we are face to face with a serious situation on our doorstep.

Who would ever have imagined that Zimbabwe, our proud showcase country, a great country that used to export food, would today be a dream turned into a horrible nightmare?

Who would have imagined that that articulate, dashing hero of the struggle would preside over a dreadful campaign of violence, killing, torture and intimidation - all of which have characterised Zimbabwe in recent days.

It is a bad thing. It is like the plot of a very bad novel.

We know it is the ghastly truth. Mr Robert Mugabe and his

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cohorts have become corrupted.

Mr Mugabe even echoes (Rhodesian prime minister) Ian Smith. Remember how Smith said, "Liberation, oh, it will never happen, over my dead body".

Well, Mr Mugabe said only God could remove him. He said even if the people voted, he would not leave State House.

He was elected in a sham of a contest accompanied by widescale violence.

Thank God the Southern African Development Community observers declared it was not free or fair. Thank God South Africa opposed any claim that it was anything other than a sham.

What do we want? What we want is peace and calm for Zimbabwe.

We want this beautiful country to recover its past glory. We want all of these refugees who are here unwillingly to be able to return home to a safe and secure place in their country.

What we want is for African leaders to confound the Afro-pessimism and say, "Hey, this election was illegitimate". We want them to reprimand Mr Mugabe and insist on negotiations for a transitional government in which the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) would have the prominent part.

Perhaps, as Morgan Tsvangirai magnanimously suggested, Mr Mugabe would accept becoming a ceremonial president while Tsvangirai becomes something in the order of an executive prime minister.

Perhaps we have to consider deploying armed personnel to oversee a return to normality in Zimbabwe.

We dream with our sisters and brothers of a return to peace, stability and prosperity in that beautiful land to those wonderful, wonderful people.

We have to remind some in our country that there were those in Zimbabwe who have been ready to kill for Mr Mugabe.

See what happens? They speak about a revolution, and I don't know what that refers to. That revolution is not going to be sustained and preserved by intemperate, almost inane, utterances.

The dream that is South Africa, the promise that is South Africa, has got to be preserved.

You and I need to preserve freedom, you and I need to stand up for

justice, you and I need to uphold our constitution.

You and I must be able to say that our people did not lose their blood for nothing, our people were not banned for nothing.

That is the gift that South Africa is, can be. South Africa says, "Hey, it is possible for people of diverse ethnicity, culture, faith, whatever, it is possible for them to cohere".

Our experiment will succeed. It must succeed, not just for us. It must succeed for the sake of the world. It must succeed for the sake of Africa and it must succeed for you and me.

We must send forth this wonderful gift of freedom, of justice, of freedom that speaks about compassion and caring, that speaks about the worth of each and every one of us.

We pray, oh how we pray, that the crisis in Zimbabwe will be resolved for our sakes, for the sakes of our children, for the sake of Africa, for the sake of the world.