



**CLA**

COMMONWEALTH LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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### **Statement on recent events in the Republic of Zimbabwe**

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is extremely concerned about the recent arrests of numerous members of opposition parties and civil society activists on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2007 when they attempted to attend a Save Zimbabwe Campaign prayer meeting.

The CLA notes reports that the detainees were mistreated whilst in custody and were visibly injured when they arrived in Court in Harare (in response to an order by the Zimbabwean High Court) on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

The CLA is disturbed about reports that Officers in Charge of the various police stations at which the detainees were being held were obstructive in relation to the provision of legal representation to the detainees. If correct, then this would be in violation of Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe and internationally accepted standards of treatment of untried prisoners.

The CLA urges the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to respect the role of lawyers as detailed in the United Nations Convention on the Role of Lawyers and ensure that lawyers are able to access their clients without any hindrance and freely discharge their duties in the interest of effective administration of justice.

The CLA considers that it is imperative that a full and independent investigation into the allegations of ill treatment and obstruction is carried out as soon as possible.

The CLA continues to actively support the legal profession in the Republic of Zimbabwe in their efforts to uphold the rule of law.

The CLA is a pan-Commonwealth professional association of lawyers and exists to maintain and promote the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth. The membership includes representatives from all 53 Commonwealth countries.

Graeme Mew

President - Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)

14 March 2007