



CLA

COMMONWEALTH LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Joint Statement on Recent Events in the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Commonwealth Lawyers' Association (CLA), the Solicitors' International Human Rights Group (SIHRG) and the Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC) are extremely concerned about reports of the violent break up, assault and subsequent dispersal of lawyers and officers of the court participating in a peaceful march, by members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police on 8th May 2007.

Notification of the peaceful march was given in accordance with the terms of Section 24 of the Public Order and Security Act. The march was sparked by the recent unlawful arrest of lawyers Alec Muchadehama and Andrew Makoni and was against the ongoing harassment of legal practitioners in the course of their duties. It was intended to present a petition to the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Commissioner of Police.

The CLA, SIHRG and BHRC note in particular that a number of lawyers were forced into a truck, assaulted and later dumped several kilometres away.

The CLA, SIHRG and BHRC renew earlier calls upon the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to respect the role of lawyers, as detailed in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (adopted in 1990) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (adopted in 1998), and to 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, SIHRG and BHRC continue 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.

The SIHRG promotes awareness of international human rights within the legal profession and mobilises solicitors into effective action in support of those rights.

The BHRC is the international human rights arm of the General Council of the Bar of England and Wales. It is an independent body primarily concerned with the protection of the rights of advocates and judges around the world.

SIGNED:

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