

Lawyers' protest in Zimbabwe

In solidarity with a resolution passed by the Law Society of Zimbabwe on 13 June 2007, to close all law offices throughout Zimbabwe and to not attend court on 27 June 2007 in protest against the recent attacks on and arrest of members of the legal profession, lawyers in Bulawayo were requested by the Law Society to gather at the High Court in Bulawayo on 27 June 2007 and to march to the offices of the Governor of Bulawayo to present a petition.

David Coltart MP and an attorney in Bulawayo, participated in the march. This is an extract of his first hand account on 28 June 2007 of the events:

'I was very proud to be part of such a courageous group of lawyers. For those of you reading this not from Zimbabwe let me remind you that our march was not filmed by any TV station as there are no independent TV stations in Zimbabwe. Nor was it covered by any independent journalists as there are no independent daily newspapers left in the country. The march was also conducted in the full knowledge that not a single police officer has been prosecuted for all the offences they have committed over

the last seven years. During the last seven years numerous unlawful assaults have been perpetrated by policemen against law abiding Zimbabweans who have been exercising their constitutional right to peaceably demonstrate. The march was also conducted in the knowledge that those policemen and women responsible for the vicious attack on Law Society President Beatrice Mtetwa a few weeks ago have not been arrested or prosecuted.

'I have one abiding memory of events

and that concerns the expressions on the faces of the riot police who formed the barricade outside the Governor's office. Although they were brandishing batons and undoubtedly could have inflicted great harm on us, when I looked into their eyes I saw no enthusiasm for what they had been ordered to do ...

'Photographs of the march can be viewed on my web site. Email: list@davidcoltart.com Website (with images): www.davidcoltart.com ; <http://davidcoltart.com/feed/>

Zimbabwe's violent suppression of lawyers attacked

The International Council of Barristers and Advocates (the ICAB) has condemned the continuing campaign of intimidation and violence being waged on Zimbabwe's lawyers by Robert Mugabe's Zanu-PF regime. The ICAB is an association of the independent referral Bars of Australia, England & Wales, Hong Kong, Ireland, Namibia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

In 2004, a group of senior barristers from the ICAB visited Harare to enquire into the threats to the rule of law and to the judiciary and legal profession which were occurring in Zimbabwe. In their report, they concluded that:

- Lawyers and magistrates had faced violent attacks on themselves and their families

- Lawyers for politically unpopular causes had been attacked or tortured
- Senior judge appointments had been subject to political interference
- The Zanu-PF party had enforced the removal of politically independent judges
- Judges had been removed through psycho-

logical and physical intimidation

- The government of Zimbabwe picked sympathetic judges to handle sensitive cases.

The ICAB has highlighted its concerns in a letter to the Law Society of Zimbabwe, the country's attorney-general and its chief justice as well as the Commonwealth secretary-general.

advocate

SA BAR JOURNAL

PUBLISHED THREE TIMES PER ANNUM (APRIL, AUGUST, DECEMBER) BY THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE BAR OF SOUTH AFRICA

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