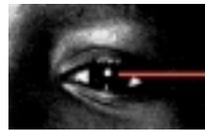




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EUROPESE DEMOKRATISCHE ADVOKATEN
EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS



P.O. Box 7113,
1007 JC AMSTERDAM
The Netherlands
info@lawyersforlawyers.org
www.lawyersforlawyers.org



ZIMBABWE WATCH

Keizersgracht 177
Postbus 1968
1000 BZ Amsterdam
Nederland
T: + 31 (0) 20 7733 787
+ 31 (0) 652 307 722
E: secr@zimbabwewatch.org
I: www.zimbabwewatch.org

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them

www.lrwc.org – lrwc@portal.ca – Tel: +1 604 738 0338 – Fax: +1 604 736 1175

3220 West 13th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. CANADA V6K 2V5

BY AIRMAIL

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe,
President of Zimbabwe,
Office of the President,
Private Bag 7700, Causeway,
HARARE, **ZIMBABWE**

**Fax: +263 4 708 211 /
+ 263.4.70.38.58;**

March 19, 2013

Subject:

Unlawful arrest and detention of human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa

Your Excellency,

We are writing you on behalf of the organizations that have signed this letter. All are human rights organizations that seek to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law. The freedom and independence of the legal profession is an essential part of the rule of law. In this context we respectfully draw your attention to the following.

On 17 March 2013, highly respected human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa was arrested while executing her professional duties. We have been informed that she was attending to a client whose home was searched by the police. She was placed under arrest after requesting the production of a valid search warrant and an inventory list of items that had already been removed. Her mobile phone, containing privileged attorney-client communication, was confiscated. She was charged with defeating and / or obstructing the course

of justice under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, section 184(1)(g).

An Urgent Chamber Application was filed by her legal team in the High Court and the court ordered that Ms. Mtetwa immediately be released from custody. Up until now, the police has not complied with this order.

We are deeply concerned by the arrest of Ms. Mtetwa, the police refusal to comply with the High Court Order for her immediate release and her continuing illegal detention. These police actions not only prevent Ms. Mtetwa from performing her professional duties, they may also serve to intimidate other human rights lawyers representing their clients.

We urge the Zimbabwean government to release Ms. Mtetwa immediately and unconditionally.

Furthermore, we remind the Zimbabwean government of its obligation to:

- recognize the valuable role played by lawyers in a democratic society as the Republic of Zimbabwe;
- promote and support the work of lawyers in line with the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.¹

In particular, we would like to draw your attention to paragraphs 16 and 17 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, that state that the government is under an obligation "to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference". According to paragraph 18 "lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions".

We also draw your attention to article 9 of the United Nations *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), that states that "everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law." Furthermore, we refer to articles 9 and 10 of the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (UDHR), which state that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

¹ *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, 27 August to 7 September 1990, U.M. Doc. A/CONF. 144/28/Rev.1 at 118 (1990), available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/lawyers.htm>.

We call on the government of Zimbabwe to honour its international human rights obligations, to release Ms. Mtetwa immediately and to ensure the personal and professional safety of her and her colleagues to carry out their professional duties, and not to be intimidated and hindered in doing so.

We kindly request to receive your response on the shortest notice possible. We will continue to monitor this very important matter closely.

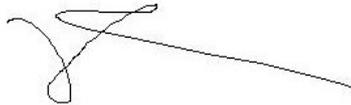
Sincerely,

Zimbabwe Watch



Hugo Knoppert
Coordinator

On behalf of the AED



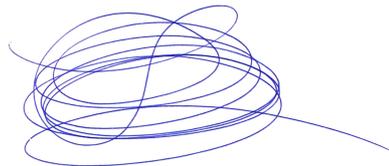
Gorka Vellé Bergado
+0034-6-457 15 116

Lawyers for Lawyers



Adrie van de Streek
Executive director

Lawyers Rights Watch Canada



Gail Davidson
Executive Director

Copied to:

His Excellencies

Mr. Patrick Chinamasa, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs of Zimbabwe

Mr. Augustine Chihuri, Commissioner-General of Zimbabwe Republic Police

Officer in charge of the Harare Central Police station, Zimbabwe

Mr. Khembo Mohadi, co-Minister of Home Affairs of Zimbabwe

Mr. Johannes Tomana, Attorney-General

Embassy of Zimbabwe in Brussel, Belgium

Netherlands Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe

Law Society of Zimbabwe