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AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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April 4, 2007

Robert Mugabe
President of Zimbabwe
172 Herbert Chitepo Avenue
P.O. Box 3340
Harare
Zimbabwe

Mr. Patrick Chinamasa
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs
P. Bag 7751
Causeway
Harare
Zimbabwe

Dear President Mugabe and Minister Chinamasa:

On behalf of the American Bar Association (ABA), I write to express its deep concern regarding the actions of the Government of Zimbabwe against citizens gathered in Highfield on Sunday, March 11 and Harvest House staffers on March 28.

The ABA is an independent, non-governmental organization established in 1878. It is the world's largest voluntary professional membership organization and represents more than 400,000 members of the legal and judicial professions.

The ABA has a long-standing commitment to supporting the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, legal professionals and advocates of civil liberties and human rights. It is the conviction of the ABA that among the cornerstones of a fair and free society are an independent judiciary and the freedom of persons to speak in opposition to policies or practices of one's government.

The ABA has received credible reports that the Zimbabwe police have violated Zimbabwe law and fundamental human rights law in attacks on citizens gathered to exercise their legitimate democratic rights at a meeting in Highfield outside of Harare. Police used live ammunition and opened fire on protestors at this meeting which resulted in the death of one and injury to others. The ABA is concerned about alleged beatings of these individuals and their detention without cause and without medical treatment. In addition, it is reported that those who have been released were affirmatively denied needed medical care and treatment.

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We are deeply concerned that more than 20 staffers at Harvest House were arrested on March 28 and remain in detention in apparent violation of their fundamental rights.

The ABA is extremely concerned about reports that the lawyers of the detainees were prevented from contacting their clients and that police refused to allow access as dictated by a court order.

Zimbabwe is a State Signatory to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights, as well as to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These recently reported events appear to indicate violations of the victims' rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, participation in political and governmental affairs, and personal integrity, all as guaranteed by articles 4, 5, 6, 11 and 13 of the African Charter, and by articles 7, 9, 10.1, 21 and 25.a of the International Covenant.

The ABA urges (a) that you use your offices to protect your citizens from further abuse and persecution and hereafter guarantee your citizens freedom of expression, association and assembly as well as the right to counsel for all Zimbabweans, as required under regional and international human rights standards, (b) that you immediately release all persons held in detention as a result of these recent occurrences and restore to them their right to medical care and treatment and (c) that you immediately cause an objective and thorough investigation to take place regarding these occurrences to determine the persons responsible for these acts and to hold them responsible under applicable criminal law.

Should you take the necessary steps to adhere to the forgoing, the ABA will join with others to recognize these positive developments. The ABA will continue to monitor your actions in this regard.

We respectfully request your immediate assurances that you will give your full attention to the matters addressed and take appropriate action take to cure these offenses.

Sincerely yours,



Karen J. Mathis

cc: Secretary of State of the United States
US State Department Zimbabwe Desk Officer
US Ambassador to Zimbabwe
American Bar Association Center for Human Rights
Zimbabwe Ambassador to the United States
Zimbabwe Minister of Foreign Affairs
Law Society of Zimbabwe