

Media Release

LCA and ABA Join World Bar Leaders in Condemning Zimbabwe Situation

The Law Council of Australia and the Australian Bar Association have both endorsed a series of resolutions made by bar associations around the world condemning the recent deterioration of the rule of law in Zimbabwe.

Australian Bar Association President Tom Bathurst QC and Law Council President Ross Ray QC have lent their support to the resolutions made at yesterday's World Bar Conference in Belfast. Bar associations from across the world have resolved to:

- Deplore the defiance of the Government of Zimbabwe of its human rights obligations under domestic and international law.
- Call upon the secretary of the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the United Nations to initiate all steps necessary to return the rule of law to Zimbabwe.
- Condemn the detention without trial of Eric Matinenga, leader of the Harare Bar, and the defiance of the order for his release granted on an urgent basis by the High Court.
- Call upon the members and secretariat of the South African Development Community to ensure that independent legal observers are permitted to be present in all courts of Zimbabwe throughout the trials of members of the legal profession who are being prosecuted for alleged offences.
- Demand that the lawyers of Zimbabwe are permitted without intimidation or penalty to perform their duty to represent and defend their clients in accordance with the rule of law and ensure their clients are entitled to basic human rights.
- Demand that the magistrates of Zimbabwe be allowed to adjudicate impartially and without intimidation on cases before them.
- Demand that the Attorney-General independently and impartially exercise his powers to uphold the rule of law.

"The Law Council and the Australian Bar Association have been highly critical of the Zimbabwean Government for its blatant disregard for the rule of law and we join the bars of the world in condemning the Government's recent actions," Mr Ray said.

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The Law Council of Australia exists to represent the legal profession at the national level, to speak on behalf of its constituent bodies on national issues, and to promote the administration of justice, access to justice and general improvement of the law.

