

August 28, 2002

Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Fax: 613-941-6900

Dear Prime Minister,

RE: CONTINUING CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE

On behalf of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA), I am writing to express our continued concern with the rapid decline in the rule of law in Zimbabwe and the worsening human rights situation. We call on you to use the occasion of your attendance at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa to discuss with your international partners ways of addressing the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe.

Of particular concern to the CBA is the crackdown by the Zimbabwe government on democratic rights, freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary and the Bar through a program of intimidation of the legal profession and judges. As you are aware, the President and the Treasurer of the Law Society of Zimbabwe were arrested in early June 2002. While no formal charges have been laid, both have been continually ordered to appear in court. In 2001, the Executive caused the resignation of a number of judges, in an attempt to compromise the independence of the judiciary. The Executive has also systematically ignored court orders and has publicly stated that it will continue to do so.

Increasingly there are reports of a rise in political killings, beatings, acts of intimidation and other assaults being inflicted on the population in Zimbabwe, particularly those who supported the opposition in the last elections. Zimbabwe is a party to the Organisation for African Unity African's Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Zimbabwe is obligated in international law to respect its population's right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Zimbabwe is violating these rights on a daily basis.

The CBA's International Development Committee works with partners in Zimbabwe to support the rule of law and democratic governance. As Canadians and as lawyers we are committed to supporting our partners in the Zimbabwean legal community who seek to protect the rights of citizens and to uphold the rule of law.

The Canadian Bar Association asks that you use the opportunity of your attendance at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to discuss with other international partners what can be done to effectively address the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe and to hold the Government of Zimbabwe accountable for its actions which are adversely affecting democracy and constitutionalism.

We thank you for your attention to this matter. We at the Canadian Bar Association are prepared to support and assist the Canadian government in addressing this issue.

Yours truly,

Simon Potter
President

c.c. Hon. Bill Graham, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs
Legal Resources Foundation, Zimbabwe
Sternford Moyo, President, Law Society of Zimbabwe