



The Law Society

From the Chief Executive

HE Gabriel Machinga
Zimbabwean Ambassador
Zimbabwean Embassy
Zimbabwe House
London WC2R 0JR

18 March 2013

Dear Ambassador

Law Society calls for immediate release of Zimbabwe Law Society past president

The Law Society is the professional body representing more than 166,000 solicitors in England and Wales. Its concerns include upholding the independence of the legal profession, the rule of law and human rights throughout the world.

The Law Society of England and Wales is calling for the immediate release of Ms Beatrice Mtetwa, the past president of the Zimbabwe Law Society.

Prominent human rights lawyer Ms Mtetwa was arrested this weekend. The facts at hand suggest that Ms Mtetwa was arrested for merely exercising her right as a lawyer to represent her client who had called her as a search was being conducted allegedly without a search warrant. Ms Mtetwa challenged the legality of the search and was therefore arrested and detained. She is currently detained at the Harare Central Police Station.

The arrest of Ms Mtetwa does not comply with United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers which state that:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; ...

17. Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

18. Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

The Law Society believes that this blatant lack of respect for the role of lawyers in the structure of democratic society demonstrates how the rule of law is yet to be fully established in Zimbabwe and is urging the immediate release of Ms Mtetwa.

Yours sincerely

Desmond Hudson
Chief Executive

Direct Line: 020 7320 5601
desmond.hudson@lawsociety.org.uk