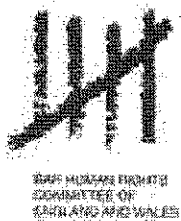


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> MAY 2009**



**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE BAR OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BAR HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMITTEE OF ENGLAND AND WALES**

The Chairmen of the Bar Council of England and Wales and of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales express their deep concern at reports of the arrest and detention of prominent human rights lawyer, Alec Muchadehama, and court clerk, Constance Gambara, in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Mr Muchadehama, of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, was accused of “obstructing the course of justice” on Thursday 14 May when he attempted to get bail orders filed for three of his clients. Mr Muchadehama is representing a group of political activists accused of plotting to overthrow the ZANU-PF government, which they deny. The activists say that they were abducted by state security agents in December last year and tortured into confessing to terrorism charges.

Ms Gambara, a clerk to High Court judge Justice Chinembiri Bhunu, was arrested and detained with her nine month old baby on Thursday. She was charged with “criminal abuse of duty as a public officer”. The accusation is that she assisted Mr Muchadehama in facilitating “the improper release” of three of his clients: freelance photojournalist Andrisson Manyere and MDC officials Gandhi Mudzingwa and Chris Dhlamini.

Mr Muchadehama was released on bail on Friday 15 May. Ms Gambara was also granted bail on Friday however the Attorney General’s office invoked section 121 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act to appeal against the granting of bail. She remains in detention in Chikurubi women’s remand prison outside Harare awaiting the outcome of the appeal.

The signatories to this statement ask the Zimbabwean authorities to abide by the Unity Government's commitment to the rule of law and immediately to withdraw any criminal charges against Mr Muchadehama and Ms Gambara. Such serious mistreatment of officers of the court is inconsistent with the rule of law.

*Desmond Browne*



**Desmond Browne QC**  
Chairman of the Bar



**Mark Muller QC**  
Chairman of the Bar Human Rights Committee