



House of Commons  
Chambre des communes

February 25, 2009  
Ottawa

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Lester B. Pearson Building, Tower "A", 10th Floor  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0G2

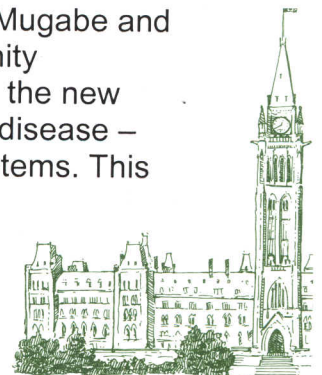
Dear Minister Cannon,

It is with deep concern about the increasingly fragile situation in Zimbabwe that we write you, to ask that you appeal, on behalf of the Government of Canada, for the swift and safe release of Mr. Roy Bennett, MDC Treasurer General and Zimbabwean Deputy Minister of Agriculture designate.

Amnesty International reported that Mr. Bennett was arrested on Friday, February 13th in Harare by the Zimbabwe Republic Police. He has been held at Mutare Central police station for almost two weeks under what have been widely reported as politically motivated charges. Mr. Bennett faces charges of attempting to commit terrorism, banditry and sabotage; conspiring to acquire arms with a view to disrupting essential services; illegal possession of firearms and weapons; and attempting to leave the country illegally. He was granted bail and then brought back into custody after the judge ruled for the prosecution to appeal the bail.

Mr. Bennett's arrest is only the most recent in a long line of politically motivated arrests in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean police forces now have in their custody over 30 Zimbabwean political and human rights activists on questionable charges of conspiring to overthrow the ZANU-PF government and/or banditry. Yesterday, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called for the national unity government to free all political prisoners and fully implement power sharing.

Human rights abuses, such as the arrest of Mr. Bennett, illustrate that Mr. Mugabe and certain ZANU-PF hardliners have no intention of participating in the new unity government in Zimbabwe in good faith, but are instead trying to undermine the new agreement. Zimbabwe has been badly ravaged by the outbreak of serious disease – most recently cholera- and the total collapse of its economic and social systems. This



new unity government must get to work in the interest of the Zimbabwean people and start rebuilding the country.

Given the dire situation in Zimbabwe, we request that you, as Canada's Foreign Minister, call for the release of Mr. Bennett from custody together with the other human rights activists who have been detained in recent months. We also request that, in light of these arrests, Canada call for an international presence in Zimbabwe to oversee the transitional process, with a specific request for monitors to investigate human rights violations committed by the Zimbabwean security forces during the transitional period.

On January 30<sup>th</sup> you stated that "Canada has been unequivocal in calling for improvements in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Zimbabwe," committing to "assess further developments in this light." We believe that the arrest of Mr. Roy Bennett and his fellow activists is such a development and that it requires a strong voice from Canada to the international community.

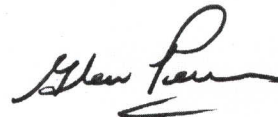
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irwin Cotler".

Hon. Irwin Cotler

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Martin".

Hon. Dr. Keith Martin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glen Pearson".

Hon. Glen Pearson