



03 JANUARY 2007

## PRESS STATEMENT

### ATTACK ON LOVEMORE MADHUKU'S HOUSE

ON 31 December 2006, the Waterfalls home of National Constitutional Assembly chairman, Lovemore Madhuku was attacked by unknown assailants who set a substance on fire close to his bedroom.

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights is concerned at the attack on the seasoned human rights defender which appears to have been well planned and targeted. Such a cowardly attack on an innocent unarmed civilian whose transgression is showing extreme concern about the national wellbeing of our country can only come from individuals who have no respect for human rights and normally act with the full knowledge of or acquiescence of some state actors. ZLHR reiterates its public position that human rights defenders like Dr Madhuku are often the only force standing between ordinary people and the unbridled power of the state. They are vital to the development of democratic processes and institutions, ending impunity and the effective promotion and protection of human rights.

*In 1998 the UN General Assembly in recognising the vital work of human rights defenders noted 'with deep concern that, in many countries, persons and organizations engaged in promoting and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms are facing threats, harassment and insecurity as a result of those activities, and that, in a number of countries ... impunity for threats, attacks and acts of intimidation against human rights defenders persists and that this has a negative impact on the work and safety of human rights defenders'*

ZLHR therefore strongly condemns this attack and is of the considered view that it is as an attempt to intimidate Dr Madhuku and send a strong chilling message to other human rights defenders as part of the systematic and sustained persecution of human rights defenders that has been going on unchecked for some time in Zimbabwe.

ZLHR therefore urges the authorities to take an urgent public, impartial and transparent investigation of this matter and bring the perpetrators to justice.

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