

Making Strides in Zimbabwe

JUSTICE FACTS: ZIMBABWE

Rule of Law: 1.4/100

2009 Prison Population:
17,967, 136 people per
100,000

The government's 42 prisons were designed for a maximum of 17,000 prisoners. Local NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross estimated that there were approximately 12,000 to 14,000 prisoners in the Zimbabwe Prison System at year's end, a significant reduction from a 2008 NGO estimate of 35,000 and the 2008 government estimate of 22,000 to 24,000.



Criminal defendants granted bail flanked by Country Fellow Innocent Maja (far left) and Legal Fellow John Burombo (far right), who assisted them.

IBJ's Defender Resource Center in Eastlea, not far from downtown Harare, provides Zimbabwe's lawyers with the resources and support they need to advance the agenda of legal reform. IBJ Zimbabwe is led by Country Fellow Innocent Maja, an energetic criminal defense lawyer committed to providing legal representation to impoverished Zimbabweans. To support Innocent's efforts, IBJ appointed lawyer John Burombo as a Legal Fellow in February 2009. Burombo is providing direct case support to poor defendants, giving priority to pretrial detainees who have been in jail the longest.

In the summer of 2009, IBJ conducted a three-day

human rights and criminal defense workshop, the very first of its kind in Zimbabwe, for about 60 lawyers from the Harare area. The goals of the workshop were to strengthen practical skills and increase knowledge about Zimbabwe's criminal procedures. Responses to the workshop were extremely positive. Participants committed themselves to the reform of Zimbabwe's criminal defense system by providing free legal assistance to at least two defendants per month with the support of IBJ. One participant concluded that "this has made us believe that it is not extraordinary men and women who change the course of history, but ordinary men and women with extraordinary skills and

beliefs." A series of trainings throughout 2010 will build on this progress.

Looking ahead, IBJ will continue to build its presence in Zimbabwe in 2010 through criminal defense trainings, roundtables involving actors in all sectors of the criminal justice system, and legal rights awareness campaigns in the mass media and at the community level. A planned training in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, will expand our presence beyond Harare. IBJ is committed to building leadership in the Zimbabwean criminal defense movement, enhancing the capacity of the legal community, and facilitating dialogue on the country's justice system.

Justice Facts Sources (all countries):

Rule of Law indicator:
World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators
Prison populations and rates:
2009 report of King's College International Centre for Prison Studies
Survey of Cambodian defendants:
Cambodian Courts Monitoring Project of the Center for Justice and Reconciliation
All other information drawn from US State Department's 2009 country reports on human rights.

At the time of his arrest, Prince Mavaro was 23 years old and married, with a one-year-old child, and was the sole breadwinner for his family. He was arrested in May 2008 on charges of unlawful entry. Prince could not afford a lawyer and ended up stuck in remand prison. During interrogations, Prince was severely assaulted by the police. He was tied up and beaten under his feet and on his knees with batons and bottles, and sustained a series of injuries which made it very difficult for him to stand up and walk. He spent almost three weeks in police custody before he was taken to a court of law, where he complained of the mistreatment he had suffered at the hands of the police. No action was taken.

Ten months after Prince's arrest, IBJ Legal Fellow John Burombo began helping him. When Burombo began providing assistance, his main concern was to get Prince out of prison. He applied for bail, but it was denied. With the court system seriously dysfunctional, Prince remained in custody, which left his wife and child completely vulnerable. Burombo therefore decided to apply for a refusal of the further remand of Prince pending trial. In March 2009, the application was made to the court. The court upheld the application, and Prince was discharged and released from custody. He had lost one year in remand prison.

Lighting the Beacon of Hope at IBJ's 2009 Jubilee for Justice in Bern

On June 6, 2009, International Bridges to Justice held its first ever Jubilee for Justice at the Bellevue Palace Hotel in Bern, Switzerland, with 200 distinguished guests in attendance. The theme of the awards and celebration dinner was 'Lighting the Beacon of Hope' to bring focus to the many and diverse supporters of IBJ.



IBJ honoree Hilde Schwab with her husband Klaus.

Photo courtesy of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

IBJ proudly presented the 2009 Leadership and Innovation Award to Hilde Schwab, the Chairperson and Co-Founder for the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. The award recognized her progressive work and dedication to the field of social entrepreneurship. As the Chairperson for the Schwab Foundation, she is a catalyst for social innovation throughout the world, supporting a community of over 150 of the world's leading social entrepreneurs. Her work has created the platform at the annual and regional summits of the World Economic Forum for the interaction of social entrepreneurs with corporate and political leaders. Other distinguished guests at the dinner included World Economic Forum Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab, author Paulo Coelho, and Swiss TV presenter Silvia von Ballmoos.

The dinner included a silent auction, as well as the opportunity to hear from IBJ Country Fellows from Cambodia, India, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and Burundi. This insider's perspective allowed guests to gain a clear vision of IBJ's mission, as well as an understanding of the important changes implemented within these various countries by each Fellow. The evening concluded with a final thank you from IBJ's CEO and Founder Karen Tse who aptly summed up the Jubilee for Justice evening by saying, "The path to justice is never easy. But we are encouraged by the community of supporters who by their presence light our way."

IBJ International Program Director Sanjeeva Liyanage with author Paulo Coelho at the 2009 Jubilee for Justice.

