



Public Statement

The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the harassment of lawyer Eric Iga Iga in Gabon

Toronto, ON – The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the harassment of lawyer Eric Iga Iga in Gabon.

Eric Iga Iga is one of two lawyers who represented opposition leader Jean Ping before the Constitutional Court in September 2016 when Mr. Ping sought to challenge the re-election of President Ali Bongo Ondimba.

According to reports, Eric Iga Iga vanished without explanation on December 8, 2016. Immediately prior to his disappearance, he reportedly told a colleague over that a suspicious car was waiting at his house and that he was trying to find out more. Late that evening, men identifying themselves as members of the military police executed a search of his home in the presence of his children.

For several days thereafter, his family and colleagues remained without news from or of him. Then, on December 13, 2016, it was revealed that Eric Iga Iga had sought and found refuge with a foreign embassy in Libreville, Gabon.

Based on the above, it would appear that Eric Iga Iga has been harassed as a result of his legal work. His safety and security continue to be at risk.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about Eric Iga Iga's situation and urges the Government of Gabon to comply with Gabon's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

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

Article 18 states:

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

The Law Society urges the Government of Gabon to:

- a. put an end to all acts of harassment against Eric Iga Iga;
- b. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Eric Iga Iga; and
- c. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society. The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

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