

## News

**C.U. Prof Helps Draft Zimbabwe Constitution***October 26, 2009 - 5:40am**By Jeff Stein*

While drafting a constitution may seem like an antiquated task for wise, old men in white-powdered wigs, today, Prof. Muna Ndulo, law, director of Cornell's Institute of African Development, will land in Harare, Zimbabwe to take part in Zimbabwe history.

Remarkably, this will not be the first time Ndulo helped create a constitution. Since joining Cornell's faculty in 1999, he has helped draft constitutions in Afghanistan in 2004 and Kenya in 2008. Ndulo even authored a book on the subject titled *Comparative Constitutionalism and Good Governance in the Commonwealth: An Eastern and Southern African Perspective*.

Throughout the week of their visit, Ndulo and 14 other international experts must walk a tightrope, trying to provide the leaders of Zimbabwe with sufficient advice without appearing to be imposing foreigners. "Ultimately, the constitution must be for Zimbabweans and by them," Ndulo said. "After all, they're the ones who will have to live with it."

Their goal is to create a constitution that promotes "good governance" and "guarantees civil liberties." Ndulo hopes the constitution will give the country a chance to develop economically after its recent spiral.

The stakes could not be higher for this team of experts, many of whom come from Zimbabwe's neighbor, South Africa. They will spend this week consulting and advising various government officials from Zimbabwe on three drafts currently being contemplated.

As Ndulo said, "Zimbabwe ... once a breadbasket with a thriving economy...[with] the best health and education indicators in Africa ... [has been] in crisis for nearly a decade."

Since 1990, its male life expectancy has plummeted from 60 to 37, according to Public Health News. Earlier this year, Zimbabwe's monthly hyperinflation rate was nearly 80 billion percent a month, according to the Cato institute.

Ndulo blames Zimbabwe's transition from a "prosperous" nation to its current "unbelievable levels of poverty" on 85-year-old President Robert Mugabe, who he described as "a man who thinks he's God." Mugabe, who has served as president since Zimbabwe won independence in 1980, nearly 30 years ago.

"It's a case of one man remaining in power for too long," Ndulo said.

Ndulo would like to see a constitution with a heavy emphasis on preventing a president from serving so long; "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely," Ndulo said, quoting Baron Acton's axiom.

Ndulo believes that, following the unmitigated disaster of Mugabe, there's a consensus that "people [in Zimbabwe] are overwhelmingly for term limits."

Despite the inherent risks of his journey, Ndulo said that he is not worried about his safety. His friend and colleague Evangeline Ray, the assistant program coordinator at Cornell's Institute of African Development, said that she's "not worried [only because] I'm so used to him traveling in dangerous places."

Ray cited how Ndulo, who she described as "incredibly humble" regarding his ventures and savvy, travelled to Kenya "just weeks" after war broke out in post-election fervor.

She added that there is no element of "looking for adventure" in Ndulo. "He is motivated by righting wrong [and] getting people to be treated more fairly."