

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Mike Campbell Foundation

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## **“Long ride for Justice”**

**Journey of around 4 million steps to call for access to justice for Zimbabwean and SADC citizens**

Even for a life-long adventurer like Zimbabwe’s Ben Freeth (54), an 800km/500 mile journey west across Zimbabwe with his remarkable horse, then west along part of Namibia’s sparsely populated Caprivi Strip with a mule, and south to the Namibian capital, Windhoek (around 1,300km/800 miles by road), is no mean feat!

Ben is executive director of the Mike Campbell Foundation and the aim of his challenging “Long Ride for Justice” is to raise awareness of the closure of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)’s regional court of justice, the SADC Tribunal, which was located in Windhoek, and to campaign for its reinstatement.

The SADC Tribunal was illegally suspended by the SADC heads of state in 2011 at the instigation of Zimbabwe’s late president, Robert Mugabe, who in 2010 refused to implement various court rulings against his government, notably the November 2008 ruling on Zimbabwe’s chaotic and often violent land confiscation programme.

This was the landmark Campbell case, *Mike Campbell (Pvt) Ltd and Others v Republic of Zimbabwe*, which was joined by 77 other dispossessed commercial farmers/title deed holders.

During the case, when Mugabe’s legal team applied for yet another postponement, Justice Luis Mondlane (Mozambique) said: “We are trying to build a house of justice in this region.”

Additionally, in December 2010, the Tribunal ordered the Zimbabwe government to pay US\$17 million compensation to nine victims of torture who suffered appalling injuries inflicted by members of the army and police, known as the Gondo case.

In 2011, the Tribunal judges were unilaterally dismissed and in August 2012, the annual SADC Summit resolved that a new Protocol on the Tribunal should be negotiated and its mandate confined to disputes between Member States.

Consequently, the 389 million SADC citizens have been denied access to justice through the region's court of last resort when the justice systems in their own countries have failed them.

However, despite his efforts, Mugabe failed in his mission to change the SADC Protocol, so in effect, the SADC court should still be open for dispossessed Zimbabwean title deed owners, as well as for the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change party and others in Zimbabwe and the region who have been denied access to justice.

"My main objective is to raise the profile of the need to have the SADC Tribunal reopened and to publicly deliver a letter to the SADC Tribunal office in Windhoek, as well as to the SADC Secretariat," explained Ben.

"A further option is to initiate a court application to compel the SADC Secretariat to reappoint the SADC Tribunal judges.

"Along the way, I hope to build a new wave of allies in support of justice for the region."

Ben began his "Long Ride for Justice" from the late Mike Campbell's now derelict Mount Carmel farm in Zimbabwe on 28 November 2023, the fifteenth anniversary of Campbell's SADC Tribunal judgment of 2008.

Mike Campbell was Ben's father-in-law, who built up a sophisticated export operation with 40,000 mango and citrus trees, and they embarked on their epic quest for justice together.

"The route across country, unsupported, from Mount Carmel farm all the way past Victoria Falls in north-western Zimbabwe to the Kazungula border post, which we reached on 21 December, 24 days after our departure, was very tough," said Ben.

"My horse, Tsedeq – which means "justice and righteousness" in Hebrew – and I travelled through heat of up to 40 degrees and drought and across difficult terrain, but Tsedeq was an absolute marvel and faced all of the challenges bravely, including some close shaves in wild country.

"Each day I rode or walked with Tsedeq from 5 in the morning and we only made camp at last light, after 7pm. Between us a close bond formed and we looked after each other.

"It was a humbling experience moving through remote rural areas where the local people face drought and hardship. All were keen to help me find water and grazing for Tsedeq, even though they had to conserve their own precious water sources," he said.

Ben resumed the Namibian leg of his journey in support of southern African citizens who are being denied access to justice on Friday 2 February 2024.

He and his mule, who he's calling Nikao, which means "to overcome" in Biblical Greek, headed west from Ngoma Bridge border post along Namibia's Caprivi Strip. Ben aims to arrive in Windhoek on 18 March.

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**To read the introduction and objectives of Ben’s “Long Ride for Justice”, click [HERE](#)**

**For further information:**

Ben Freeth, executive director

Mike Campbell Foundation

Whatsapp: +44 7539 070 122 – limited mobile phone signal in parts of Namibia

Mobile: +263 773 929 138 (Zimbabwe)

E-mail: [benfreeth7@gmail.com](mailto:benfreeth7@gmail.com)

OR:

E-mail: [press@pressmcf.com](mailto:press@pressmcf.com)

Ben Freeth is the executive director of the Mike Campbell Foundation and is based in Zimbabwe.

The objective of the MCF is to restore human rights, justice, the rule of law and property rights for all in Zimbabwe.

**Note to editors:**

- Update blogs, photos and short video clips of Ben’s journey will be released and uploaded on the Mike Campbell Foundation’s website: [www.mikecampbellfoundation.com](http://www.mikecampbellfoundation.com)
- Ben could not complete the two legs of the trip consecutively because he had crucial meetings in the UK during January
- Ben hopes to write a book about the journey and the long ride for justice in the region.