

'Violation of human rights' to be heard in Court of Appeal



PROTEST: Supporters make their feelings known at a rally for the release of Ahmed Zaoui.

by Edward Gay

Detained Algerian politician Ahmed Zaoui will take his case to the Court of Appeal in December.

His lawyer Deborah Manning says he is fighting for one of three outcomes.

"We are asking that he be transferred to the Mangere Refugee Centre or released on bail to live with the Auckland Dominican community or for his outright release," she says.

About 300 people marched in Auckland in support of Zaoui earlier this month.

Zaoui has been imprisoned for 20 months, despite the Refugee Status Appeals Authority declaring him a refugee in August 2003.

But he remains in prison because of a security risk certificate, issued by the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service.

All parties agree that the process of issuing security certificates needs

to be reviewed.

"There will be a review after Mr Zaoui's case but to use a rugby saying, 'you can't change the rules half way through the game,'" says a spokesman for Prime Minister Helen Clark.

But Ced Simpson of Amnesty International disagrees.

"This is absolutely ludicrous. Justice is achieved one person at a time and one case at a time. This stance is extremely disturbing."

Simpson believes there are wider implications to the case, including the tarnishing of New Zealand's international reputation as a just nation.

"We as a nation can't defend people's rights by violating other peoples. We shouldn't be known as a violator of human rights but as an upholder."

Clive Aspin, of the Human Rights Foundation, believes the case has serious ramifications for all New Zealanders.

"What's to stop this from happening to anyone?"

"Our international reputation has been tarnished. I was overseas recently [in Australia] and when I told them about Mr Zaoui's case - they were appalled.

"This case signifies a considerable erosion of human rights and has highlighted considerable deficiencies in our system.

Aspin says New Zealand has international human rights commitments but has ignored Zaoui's human rights.

"He's been charged with nothing but he remains in prison," says Aspin.

Manning says if the result is unfavourable then the lawyers will take the case to the Supreme Court.

The Human Rights Foundation is raising funds to fly witnesses to New Zealand if this happens.

"We've got a Don

McGlashan concert planned and an art auction. We're also planning a dance party for Mr Zaoui," says Aspin.

But if the Supreme Court case is unsuccessful Immigration Minister Paul Swain will have three working days to review Zaoui's case.

Supporters fear that Zaoui could be returned to Algeria after the New Zealand government renewed its ties with the military dictatorship earlier this month.

"It would be unthinkable to return Mr Zaoui to Algeria with the death sentences issued against him there," says Manning.



Activist Graeme Easte at the rally.

Vicar calls for Christians to act justly over bill

by Claire Cooper

A local Anglican vicar supports the Civil Union Bill, saying it is "absolute rot" to think it will undermine marriage.

Hugh Kempster, of St Columba Church and the Auckland branch of Christians for Civil Union, says the Christian faith requires all people to act justly and give equal rights to all.

The group is putting submissions together and plans to march in support of the bill when it goes to Parliament for its second reading this month.

But it will face strong opposition from Christians who plan to march against the bill at Parliament.

In preparation for this event, Christians from Destiny Church



HUGH KEMPSTER

marched down Queen St on August 7 protesting against gay marriage.

They wore t-shirts branded with the slogan "enough is enough" and chanted things such as "marriage is between one man and one woman".

The proposed legislation aims to allow homosexual unions.

In doing so, it gives gay partners the same legal and social rights as married couples.

The first reading of the bill in Parliament was narrowly passed on June 24 and submissions for the second reading closed on August 6.

The bill will be accompanied by the Omnibus Bill, which alters nearly 150 pieces of past legislation that discriminates against same sex couples.

The bill has been hailed by Labour MP Tim Barnett as 21st century leg-

islation that meets international human rights standards.

Three gay Auckland residents, who do not wish to be named, say it is time they had the same rights as everyone else.

"We shouldn't be disadvantaged over prejudices," says one of the men.

Kempster says people have enough going on in their lives without having to feel extra relationship pressure as well.

"We just want to acknowledge that gay and lesbians are normal people," he says.

The bill is the first step along the way to full equality.

"Full equality is my vision. But realistically that won't happen in today's society so the Civil Union Bill is the next best step.

"Our main aim is to let the public know that not all Christians are against the bill - that there is more than one Christian perspective."

The Christian political party Destiny NZ has very close ties to Destiny Church.

This concerns Kempster. "There is a clear motivation behind the Destiny Party to convert all New Zealanders.

"If a mix of National and Destiny NZ was voted in, New Zealand would be completely different - it would be very scary."

St Columba Church and the Auckland Community Church held a "celebrating the diversity of our partnerships day" yesterday at the Anglican church St Matthews in the City.

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