



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Council of Australia Law Deans calls upon General Musharraf to restore the rule of law in Pakistan**

The peak body of Australian law schools, the Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD), today called upon General Musharraf, President of Pakistan, to restore the sacked Chief Justice of Pakistan to office, to stop rounding up Pakistan's leading lawyers and academics and detaining them without trial, and generally to restore the rule of law in Pakistan.

In an open letter to General Musharraf, CALD Chair Professor Michael Coper said that restoration of the rule of law in Pakistan was vital if Pakistan was to be taken seriously by the world community as a peace loving, democratic nation.

'There is nothing more critical to the rule of law', Professor Coper said, 'than the independence of the judiciary and freedom from arbitrary detention. We hear reports of lawyers being rounded up and detained, and being maltreated while in detention, simply because they are protesting against General Musharraf's abandonment of proper legal processes. All societies need proper legal processes and lawyers to administer them. The alternative is dictatorship, chaos, and disregard for human rights.'

Professor Coper added that Australian lawyers and legal educators well understood the severe security issues facing Pakistan and the necessity for law and order. He pointed out, however, that when this came at the price of arbitrary detention, brutality of treatment of those in detention, dismissal of independent judges and their replacement with compliant ones, targeting of professional groups like lawyers and academics, and the exercise of power without proper constitutional authority, then the terrorists had already won a substantial victory in their assault on freedom and democracy.

The full text of the open letter of the Council of Australian Law Deans to General Musharraf is attached and may also be seen at <http://www.cald.asn.au/>.

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