



Leave our Caster alone

WHILE the storm has been raging over the controversial female classification rules of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), Caster Semenya has been conducting herself in her usual dignified manner.

"God made me the way I am and I accept myself. I am who I am and I am proud of myself," she tweeted this week.

The IAAF has introduced a new policy attempting to regulate women naturally producing testosterone levels above five nanomoles per litre.

These regulations are limited to athletes competing in events ranging from the 400m to the 1 500m, the very ones Semenya has excelled in over the last few years.

Many have accused the IAAF of orchestrating a witch hunt directed at Semenya, which is supported by the fact the regulations are aimed at a select group of women.

The new guidelines claim women producing a higher level of testosterone than the so-called norm have an unfair advantage over other women.

The IAAF is yet to publish the scientific evidence to support this notion, and the previous research it had commissioned did not point to any advantage within the range that men have over women.

Semenya is merely the face of a deeper and entrenched discrimination against women and reminds us of the humiliating past practices of sex testing.

University of Pretoria law professor Steve Cornelius has been among the leading dissenting voices against the rules he believes would be "unlawful in various jurisdictions around the globe".

Cornelius resigned from the IAAF disciplinary tribunal in a scathing letter to the athletics body's president, Sebastien Coe. It was a brave stand, and many around the globe have supported the professor.

Support for Semenya and those who took a stand against the regulations is growing. Athletics SA yesterday announced it would challenge the new guidelines and go to court if necessary.

The IAAF keeps saying that it wants to "level the playing field". The fact that the association is trying to achieve this through the specific curtailment of an athlete's natural hormone level is simply wrong.

We say: Leave our Caster alone.

We salute her for making her country and womanhood proud.

