



SA official quits IAAF over Caster saga

Ockert de Villiers

SOUTH African law professor Steve Cornelius said he was willing to provide legal expertise to Caster Semenya or any athlete who challenges the International Association of Athletics Federations' (IAAF) controversial female classification rules.

Cornelius has joined a growing chorus condemning the amended regulations by resigning from the international athletics body's disciplinary tribunal.

"In my opinion it is unlawful; definitely in South Africa, because it discriminates against women. That is just one point, and it would be unlawful in Europe for the same reason," Cornelius said.

"I see the Canadian Athletics Federation has released a statement questioning the legality of the regulations, because I think they know it would also not hold up in Canadian law.

"So I just took a principled stand to say I cannot sit on a panel

where I would have to apply this, knowing there is a problem."

The IAAF introduced a new policy on April 26 attempting to regulate women who naturally produce testosterone levels above 5 nanomoles per litre.

For now, the regulations are limited to athletes who compete in events ranging from the 400m to the mile (1.6km).

In a hard-hitting letter to IAAF president Seb Coe, Cornelius hit out against the "antiquated views of the 'old' scandal-hit IAAF".

"On deep moral grounds I cannot see myself part of a system in which I may be called upon to apply regulations I deem to be fundamentally flawed, and most likely unlawful in various jurisdictions around the globe," wrote Cornelius, who is a professor at the University of Pretoria's faculty of law.

"It would also be unethical for me to devote time and energy to expose the warped ideology behind the new regulations while serving on the disciplinary tribunal."

Athletics Canada said in a statement it would hold discussions with government officials and other national sports organisations, but believed the "IAAF eligibility ruling requires rigorous review".

Cornelius penned a paper before he was appointed to the IAAF's disciplinary tribunal, voicing his objections to any kind of regulations. The IAAF appointed Cornelius despite his strong views on the matter, which gave him the impression that the monolithic athletics body was open to change.

"I was quite surprised that they approached me, because I was quite outspoken in that journal article against the IAAF's regulations," Cornelius said.

"But I saw it as a sign that they were perhaps moving away from the regulations, and when I saw it slowly but surely rearing its head again, I was very disappointed.

"Seeing the regulations in its final form is a real disappointment. "Looking at the regulation, it

is a poor piece of work and it will cause a lot of problems as it is."

Cornelius, who was appointed to the inaugural IAAF disciplinary tribunal last year, wrote in his resignation letter he could not in good conscience associate himself with "an organisation which insists on ostracising certain individuals".

"I am confident that history will judge you and the members of the IAAF Council harshly for going down this route," Cornelius wrote.

"I can only do what my conscience directs, but I hope there are others who are in some way involved with the IAAF and who have the courage of conviction to take a strong stand against this injustice, which the IAAF will perpetrate against certain female athletes."

Cornelius has deep family ties with the University of Pretoria's track and field. His brother Danie is the athletics manager, while his nephew Neil is the former coach to world long-jump champion Luvo Manyonga.

