



South Africa will fight for 'our Caster'

WHILE the storm rages over female classification rules of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), Caster Semenya has continued to conduct 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 introduced a new policy attempting to regulate women naturally producing testosterone levels above five nanomoles per litre.

These rules are limited to athletes competing in events ranging from the 400m to the 1 500m, the same ones Semenya has excelled in.

Many have accused the IAAF of a witch-hunt directed at Semenya, stating that the regulations are aimed at a select group of women.

The new guidelines claim women producing more 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 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, Sebastian Coe. It was a brave stand and many have supported him. Support for Semenya and against the regulations is growing. Athletics SA 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 curtailing an athlete's natural hormone level is simply wrong. We say: Leave our Caster alone.

