

Caster Semenya Optimistic on Eve of European Court of Human Rights Hearing

Strasbourg, May 14, 2024 – Double Olympic Champion Caster Semenya is feeling poised and confident in advance of her landmark hearing tomorrow before the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights. The Grand Chamber hearing is the latest chapter of her 15-year fight against World Athletics to compete without having to undergo unethical and ineffective medical treatment.

Ms Semenya argues that the Court of Arbitration for Sport and the Swiss Federal Supreme Court failed to adequately protect her fundamental human rights in their respective consideration of her legal challenge to World Athletics eligibility regulations for women athletes with differences in sex development. Those rules require her to undergo unnecessary and potentially harmful medical interventions in order to compete in the female category of international athletics.

In July 2023, the Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights ruled that there had been multiple violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, including her right to be free from discrimination taken together with her rights to privacy (including her right to physical autonomy and her right to practice her profession). Ms Semenya is confident that the Grand Chamber will reach a similarly favourable judgment that will lead to the recognition of human rights in the governance of international sport.

“This is an important day in my journey as a human being and athlete. It has been a long time coming,” said Ms Semenya. “In 2009 I stood atop the podium at the Berlin World Championships having just been sex tested and knowing that the world was judging my body and questioning my sex. In the fifteen years since then I have persevered with dignity in the face of oppression. The adversity I have overcome has helped shaped me into a true champion and a compassionate mother, wife, sister, and daughter. I hope that the Court’s decision will pave the way for all athletes’ human rights to be fiercely protected, for once and for all, and inspire all young women to be and accept themselves in all their diversity.”

For media inquiries, please contact Greg Nott of Norton Rose Fulbright South Africa at gregory.nott@nortonrosefulbright.com. However, interviews will not be possible until after the Grand Chamber judgment is released.