

The sham solidarity with Mugabe shown by African leaders at his funeral is in sharp contrast to the enlightened attitude taken by the African Union over the plight of African refugees and migrants stranded in Libya on their way to Europe.

Thousands of them have drowned in the Mediterranean over the last decade, victims of people smugglers often acting in concert with Libyan officials. Others have been tortured to extract ransoms from their families or enslaved. Still others have died as victims of the civil war, such as 50 or so migrants in a detention camp in the Libyan capital Tripoli killed in July in an airstrike – unsurprising as the detention facility was also used as a militia base.

The European Union has been sharply divided over the migrant influx, not only from sub-Saharan Africa but also the Middle East and Asia. It will be pleased with the deal with the African Union under which five hundred African migrants will be taken to a refugee camp near the Rwandan capital Kigali. They will be gradually integrated into Rwandan society with a view to taking further groups of 500 up to a maximum of 30,000. A spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees hailed the plan as ‘a lifeline’.

Rwanda sets a good example to xenophobic South Africa whose President Cyril Ramaphosa was greeted with boos at Mugabe’s funeral. The London newspaper, the Times, observed: ‘In a capital city where power is off for most of the day, clean water runs only occasionally and basic foods cost five times as much as a year ago, mourners travelled through the night for the funeral today of the man who led Zimbabwe from prosperity to starvation. On one side of Harare lackeys from African embassies squabbled over the only presidential suite in the city’s best hotel as the continent’s heads of state flew in to pay their respects to Robert Mugabe their last liberation hero. Cyril Ramaphosa, the president of South Africa, is expected to attend the funeral, along with 12 other former and current African leaders. Across the city, police prepared to close down potholed streets around the funeral venue to make way for motorcades. The chaotic arrangements, fraught with rumours of witchcraft, backhanders and threats, have become a metaphor for the former president’s ruinous and divisive era.’

The funeral was barely over before normal life resumed in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors’ Association says its acting president, Dr Peter Magombeyi, has been abducted by suspected state agents. It said Dr Magombeyi had received several anonymous warnings after doctors went on strike for improved wages and better working conditions. Who knows, perhaps the African leaders might sit up and pay attention at last?

Other points

- At the Vigil today it was agreed to hold a demonstration at next Saturday's Vigil (21st September) about the huge amount of money being spent on Mugabe which should be spent on the suffering people of Zimbabwe: coffin, mausoleum still to be built, convoys and celebrations of his life. Vigil activists were appalled at this profligacy when the country is suffering from a scarcity of medical supplies, electricity, fuel, water, cash and basic commodities. Food prices are going up every day because of inflation and economic mismanagement. Vigil activists decided that we will not mourn Robert Mugabe after all he has done – rigging and stealing elections, killing and abducting people and Gukurahundi that cost over 20 000 lives. Millions of people are fleeing the country. Mugabe is not more important than the suffering masses of Zimbabwe. In fact, he's gone and good riddance! Thanks to Rosemary Maponga and Heather Makawa for organising this protest.

- Thanks to those who helped set up the front table and put up the banners today: Patience Chimba, Pamela Chirimuta, Tawanda Chitate, Nathan Chiyanja, Delice Gavazah, Beulah Gore, Simbarashe Jingo, Josephine Jombe, Jonathan Kariwo, Heather Makawa, David Makuyana, Rosemary Maponga, Patricia Masamba, Lucia Mudzimu, Margaret Munenge, Esther Munyira, Tapiwa Muskwe, Molly Ngavaimbe, Hazvinei Saili, Rudo Takiya and Ephraim Tapa. Thanks to Josephine, Rosemary and Margaret for looking after the front table, to Lucia, Heather and Tawanda for handing out flyers, to Hazvinei and Tapiwa for drumming and to Hazvinei, Patricia, Jonathan and Heather for photos.

- For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimb88abwevigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

FOR THE RECORD: 25 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Vigil protest 'Good riddance Mugabe'**. Saturday 21st September from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: Zimbabwe Embassy London. Contact: Rosemary Maponga 07565842415 and Heather Makawa 07716391800.

- **ROHR Reading branch outreach and general meeting**. Saturday 21st September. Community outreach from 11.30 am – 1.30 pm. Awareness campaign on deteriorating human rights in Zimbabwe. Venue: Broad Street, Reading. General meeting from 2 – 5 pm: Venue: The RISC 35-39 London Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4PS. Contact Nicodimus 07877386792, Josephine 07455166668, Shyllette 07828929806, Josh 07877246251.

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events,

sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is

<http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

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. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency' is based on our weekly diaries. It records how events in Zimbabwe have unfolded as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil. All proceeds go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

- Facebook pages:

Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>