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There apparently being nothing pressing to do at home, comrade Mnangagwa splashed out \$30,000 an hour on hiring a plane from Dubai to fly him and his delegation to a conference in France. He is reported to have been accompanied by the fuel tycoon Kudakwashe Tagwirei, known among the corrupt elite as Queen Bee. The Reserve Bank recently ordered all banks to freeze his accounts and he was thought to have already fled the country.

By quadrupling energy charges Mnangagwa must have felt flush enough to hand over a million dollars to the global fund set up to raise funds for primary health care in the third world. It wasn't exactly a charitable gesture, just the membership fee for an organization that has approved grants of \$1.7 billion to Zimbabwe since 2002 – coincidentally the same year the Vigil started outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London.

Nevertheless, the French trip, during which he also took in Uganda, was strongly reminiscent of the Mugabe days – always expensively flying off somewhere, often to the most obscure gatherings. On one occasion Mugabe set off for some minor meeting in India where they hardly knew who he was. Perhaps it was a meeting of the Hyderabad City Council's Finance Committee . . .

Now seventeen years after the start of our Saturday protests it seems that little has changed. Mugabe becomes Mnangagwa. It's all the same: Zanu PF brothers in alms feeding off the country that produces nothing but poverty and refugees – world class beggars and fraudsters.

John Sparks, the Africa correspondent of Sky News, eloquently expresses what we feel: 'There was one particular rumour that rocketed around the city of Harare this week. It was a scrap of information, shared on the streets and on social media, which speaks volumes about the desperate state Zimbabweans now find themselves in. The word was, staff at a government office had started printing Zimbabwean passports. A massive queue, thousands of people long, formed in the early morning light as residents of the capital grasped the opportunity to get their travel papers. If there is a communal dream in this beleaguered nation, it generally involves leaving it - to find food, work and a little stability abroad. Unsurprisingly, their hopes were

dashed. Members of the queue were told to come back later in the month "for an assessment of the reasons why you need to travel". The fact is, civil servants cannot produce passports because the government cannot afford to pay for the paper and ink. The country's registrar general, Clemence Masango, recently admitted to a whopping backlog of 370,000 passports. Nor is Mr Masango likely to get the supplies he needs because this crisis-ridden government is not governing and the economy has virtually collapsed.'

Well, the Vigil has not collapsed though, unlike our first one all those years ago, this time we were greeted by rain, dampening the enthusiasm of the climate change protesters who have been demonstrating in London, bringing traffic in some parts of the city to a halt.

Other points

- Thanks to Cephas Maswoswa, Deborah Harry, Esther Munyira and Mercy Bayipayi for the wonderful cake marking the Vigil's 17th anniversary. Cephas, Deborah and Esther also brought face masks of Mnangagwa and his wife and posters showing Mnangagwa as a devil and a crocodile.

- Mugabe also visited the Vigil to have a laugh with Mnangagwa. It will probably be the last time we can use the Mugabe mask which we acquired in December 2007 during our demonstration against Mugabe's visit to Lisbon. Strangely enough the rubber mask has perished along with Mugabe.

- Our faithful supporter David Wilkins, a journalist who is blind, apologised for his absence on our anniversary. David is losing his hearing and said because of covering his head for the rain he would have found it difficult to hear what we were saying. The good news is that he has been invited to visit the US. David recently interviewed Vigil founder member and ROHR head Ephraim Tapa and the interview can be heard on this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/yomeswrjm85e056/Interview%20With%20Ephraim%20Tapa.mp3?dl=0>

- Thanks to those who helped set up the front table and put up the banners today: Pamela Chirimuta, Rangarirai Chivariro, Delice Gavazah, Deborah Harry, Josephine Jombe, Jonathan Kariwo, Patricia Masamba, Esther Munyira, Hazvinei Saili, Rudo Takiya and Kevin Wheedon. Thanks to Hazvinei, Josephine and Farai Mutumburi for looking after the front table, to Esther and Deborah for handing out flyers, to Delice and Washington Mugari for drumming and to Patricia, Hazvinei and Jonathan for photos. A special thank you to Philip Mapongo who bought burgers and fries for everyone, to Phillip Mahlahla and Jonathan for putting up the tarpaulin and to Phillip for tirelessly getting rid of the pooling water on the tarpaulin which threatened to bring it down.

- 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: 19 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR fundraising dinner dance.** Saturday 2nd November from 6 pm till late. Venue tba. ROHR is hosting a dinner dance to raise funds for a Zimbabwe peace building initiative. Tickets £25. Contact: Esther Munyira 07492058109, Hazvinei Sali 07857602830, Margaret Munenge 07384300283, Pamela Chirimuta 07762737339.

- **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/>

. 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> IROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>
ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>