

The dire situation in Zimbabwe has been getting a lot of attention in the British media – particularly since the visit to Zimbabwe by a UN representative who warned that Zimbabweans were on the verge of man-made starvation.

The UN envoy, Hilal Elver, spoke of widespread corruption, economic and technical decay, partisan food distribution and said nearly 90% of infants have stunted growth.

On top of this, we learnt that senior doctors have joined hundreds of their junior colleagues in a mass walkout, speaking of ‘a silent genocide’ caused by the dire conditions in hospitals. For its part, the European Union expressed concern at the slow pace of political reform, saying democratic space was again being curtailed.

The Times newspaper nevertheless found space to print a letter from Foreign Affairs Minister, Comrade General Sibusiso B Moyo, in response to an article about Zimbabwe the paper carried earlier. The article in question was about the latest vicious police behaviour towards MDC supporters in Harare.

Moyo’s vacuous letter didn’t deny the egregious behaviour of the police. He said the government knew ‘more work is required to bring the security services up to international standards’. He went on: ‘Here too international co-operation is welcomed. We also welcome the opposition’s input on these issues’. What a bare-faced lie. The police violently crush a peaceful gathering at MDC headquarters and Moyo blithely speaks about welcoming the opposition’s input. The truth is the police are given free reign to act with impunity.

Take another incident which took place last week: a drunken inspector of police, six police thugs, the baseless arrest of the President of the Association of Rural Teachers and then a vicious police assault on his legal representative at Harare Central police station. A day in the life of Zimbabweans . . .

MDC Senator David Coltart, who was Minister of Education in the Government of National Unity, gave a graphic account of the events. Himself a lawyer, he had a personal interest: the lawyer so disgracefully treated while fulfilling his duty was his son Douglas – the second time he

had been assaulted by police in recent months while representing clients.

Senator Coltart continued: 'The assault of a legal practitioner acting in the course of his professional duties is unacceptable and a serious breach of criminal law and the constitution of Zimbabwe. In the normal course of events such an assault would result in the suspension and possible dismissal of the police officers involved, upon being proved guilty of the offence. In Zimbabwe police officers in the last few years have been guilty of far worse assaults on civilians than the one perpetrated against Coltart. For example the assaults by police officers of innocent old men and women in central Harare on Wednesday the 20th November 2019 resulted in far more serious, potentially life threatening, injuries being inflicted on victims. Not a single police officer has been suspended or charged for numerous unlawful assaults on civilians during the last few years.'

Senator Coltart commented: 'In my 36 years of legal practice in Zimbabwe I have never heard of any lawyer who has been assaulted trying to represent his or her client. This conduct of the police is accordingly a serious deterioration in Zimbabwe's human rights situation. It is also incumbent on churches, civic groups and the international community to speak out against this vile conduct. Zimbabweans are rendered defenceless by an increasingly rogue police force and if the international community in particular does not act against this conduct the culture of impunity within the security forces of Zimbabwe will grow. This in turn will result in all Zimbabweans being rendered ever more vulnerable and abuses of fundamental human rights will escalate.'

## Other points

- Environment Minister Mangalisa Ndlovu unwisely submitted himself to an interview by the BBC's HardTalk programme. Unwise because Ndlovu emerged as just another Zanu PF clone, basically saying all our troubles are because of illegal sanctions and bad weather. (See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000bt2b/hardtalk-on-the-road-in-zimbabwe-climate-change>)

- President Mnangagwa is at last doing something of which the Vigil approves. He announced that the Mugabe family stands to lose more than 10 of its stolen farms. He said: 'This family in this province has many farms, although they used to preach against people having many farms. We are going to take some of the more than 10 farms from them that they have and leave them with one farm since that is what they

- preached.'

- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the front table and put up the banners: Cynthia Chibanda, Yvonne Jacobs, Joyce Mbairatsunga, Washington Mugari, Margaret

Munenge and Ephraim Tapa. Thanks to Joyce and Yvonne for looking after the front table, to Bigboy Sibanda for handing out flyers, to Margaret for drumming and to Ephraim for photos. Thanks to those who stayed to the end to pack up on a bitterly cold and bleak day: Cynthia, Yvonne, Washington, Margaret, Ephraim and Kevin Wheeldon.

- 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:** 9 signed the register.

## EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR fundraising dinner dance in aid of women living with HIV/AIDS in rural Zimbabwe.** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December from 7 pm till late. Venue: Lee Chapel South Community Centre, The Knares, Basildon SS16 5SA. Formal dress code. Tickets £30. Contact organisers: Esther Munyira 07492058109, Simbarashi Jingo 07722998848, Rangarirai Chivaviro 07378429599 and Patience Chimba 07896496379.

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

**ZAF:**

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