

A valiant group braved coronavirus to hold the Vigil outside the Zimbabwe Embassy despite the UK gradually going into lockdown as the disease claims more victims.

Airliners are being grounded and large gatherings cancelled to reduce the chances of infection. People are urged to wash their hands frequently, not to shake hands and, indeed, keep a metre distance from others – difficult if crowded into a bus or train.

These precautions are being taken in countries with sophisticated health services. What will happen when the coronavirus hits Zimbabwe fills us with trepidation, given the state of its health service and the weakened immune system of so many malnourished people.

Whether this troubles the Zanu PF elite is open to doubt. After all, President Mnangagwa, instead of investing in hospitals, has wasted money on hiring three expensive public relations companies to campaign for the removal of US sanctions. The Americans have now extended them, including Owen Ncube, the security minister accused of ordering security services to abduct and mistreat members of the opposition.

The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, urged the Zimbabwe government to 'immediately end state-sponsored violence including against peaceful protesters, civil society, labour leaders and members of the opposition in Zimbabwe, and to investigate and hold accountable those

responsible for human rights violations and abuse.

(See:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-zimbabwe-sanctions/u-s-blacklists-zimbabwe-officials-over-human-rights-abuse-idUKKBN20Y2D7>

).

To mark the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abduction of the human rights campaigner Itai Dzamara, the European Union has demanded action by the Zimbabwe government. The response was a bizarre statement by the police that investigations into the matter were continuing and that law enforcement agents had submitted 'over 113 fortnightly updates to the High Court'! (See:

<https://www.herald.co.zw/police-submit-over-100-reports-on-dzamara/>

.)

An equally bizarre comment came from Zimbabwe's Defence Minister Oppah Muchinguri who said coronavirus was the work of God punishing countries which imposed sanctions. She added: 'They are now staying indoors. Their economies are screaming just like they did to our economy'. (see: <https://www.enca.com/news/coronavirus-work-god-punishing-west-zimbabwe-minister> .)

## **Other points**

- During the week a number of Vigil activists attended a meeting of the Mike Campbell Foundation at the Royal Geographical Society. Under the title 'Living on the Edge' there was a discussion on the rule of law in Zimbabwe. Chief Felix Ndiweni gave a moving account of his legal persecution. The late Mike Campbell was one of the farmers beaten up when his land was seized. We doubt that he would be convinced by the government's announcement offering land to dispossessed farmers (see: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-13/zim>

[zimbabwe-offers-land-to-recompense-dispossessed-white-farmers](#)

). Those who attended from the Vigil and MDC were: Cephas Maswoswa, Charles Mararirikwenda, David Kadzutu, Delice Gavazah, Dennis Benton, Esther Munyira, Handsen Chikowore, Martin Chinyanga, Mary Muteyerwa, Mercy Mukaririrwa, Patricia Masamba, Rose, Benton, Rosemary Maponga and Tapiwa Muskwe. Special thanks to Rose Maponga for bringing a drum.

- Thanks to those who arrived early to help set up the Vigil today: Miriam Gasho, Rosemary Maponga, Philip Maponga, Patricia Masamba, Tapiwa Muskwe, Farai Mutumburi, Sithobekile Sikhosana and Kevin Wheeldon. Thanks to Rosemary and Miriam for looking after the front table, to Farai, Kevin, Netsayi Makarichi and Sithobekile for handing out flyers, to Patricia for taking photos, to Miriam for prayers and to Rosemary for providing hot drinks.

- 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:** 10 signed the register.

## EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April from 11.30 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Road SE1 8XX. Contact: Ephraim Tapa 07940793090, Patricia Masamba 07708116625, Esther Munyira 07492058107.

- **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/zimbabwевigil>

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

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