

Every military regime such as Zanu PF goes mad in its own way, whether its Venezuela, Russia, Iran or China . They share a common aim: to enrich themselves at the expense of their enslaved people.

Zanu PF has spent 40 years honing their model, which has hardly changed despite the army coup against Mugabe. And they are not going to change their methods now. Why should they if they are working?

The other day the British Embassy urged all UK citizens in Zimbabwe to return home immediately even though the daily death toll from the coronavirus here was now touching 1,000 and Zimbabwe's Deputy Information Minister Energy Mutodi claims that the probability of coronavirus gaining a foothold in Zimbabwe is 'next to zero'. (See: <https://www.zimeye.net/2020/04/09/mutodi-pours-cold-water-on-chamisas-unwise-suggestion/>.)

A bold claim and we would be relieved if it came true. But we doubt it, especially given Zimbabwe's inadequate medical service and that so many people are malnourished and without adequate water or the capacity to self-isolate to prevent infection, which appears to have been the key to fighting off the virus everywhere else.

The government has been criticised for approving the use of traditional herbal treatment for coronavirus patients. We would not scoff at traditional medicine but note that Dr Nyika Mahachi, the President of the Zimbabwe College of Public Health Physicians, said the government's decision was unwelcome and that it was important to stick to the World Health Organisation guidelines on how to contain the virus (see:

<https://www.voanews.com/science-health/coronavirus-outbreak/zimbabwes-government-says-herbal-treatment-ok-covid-19>

).

The reality is that, even if the government is serious about the pandemic, it does not have much room to manoeuvre, given that the International Monetary Fund says that Zimbabwe only has US\$109 million in foreign exchange reserves – enough for only one week's imports – because the virus threatens tobacco sales, the second biggest source of foreign exchange (see: <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimbabwe-dollar-zwl-usd-news-fx-shortage-to-worsen-on-virus/>).

While the United Nations tries to raise money to feed Zimbabwe, it is disturbing to read of the all-too-familiar tactics by Zanu PF to hijack a social welfare programme funded by the World Bank to cushion informal traders against the lockdown (see: <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zanu-pf-hijacks-wold-bank-funds/>

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Of course the country's main source of revenue is mining but this has for long been under the control of the military and the Zanu PF bigwigs. An article by Kudzai Chimhangwa in Open Democracy gives a useful update on the looted resources behind the Zimbabwe emergency – money which could have saved us from the looming disaster (see: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/will-zimbabwes-diamonds-be-forever-a-glimpse-into-a-nations-resource-rich-curse/>).

Of one thing you can be sure: the military will be able to keep order whatever happens. They have all the bullets necessary. And they have the support of SADC and AU and the embrace of fellow tyrants from China to Venezuela (see: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2020/04/10/military-in-us90m-murky-weapons-deals/>).

## Other points

- We were saddened to hear of the death of Mike Auret, the former MDC MP, and one of the people who inspired the Vigil. Mike chaired the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace which exposed the extent of the Gukurahundi genocide carried out by Zanu PF in the 1980s.
- Our condolences to Vigil Co-ordinator Esther Munyira at the passing of her father.
- Because of the coronavirus we can no longer physically meet outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London, so we have started a virtual Vigil. We asked our activists to put on Vigil / ROHR / Zimbabwe regalia and take a photo of themselves holding an appropriate poster reflecting our protest against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The photos are uploaded on our Flickr site (see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/albums/72157713848220758> ). Our virtual Vigil activist today was Charles Mararirakwenda who kindly contributed to Vigil funds.
- For Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

## Notices

- **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>