

After a long wet winter in the UK we are having a golden spring. So it's doubly vexatious that we are still in coronavirus lockdown after five weeks – with no end in sight.

Unlike Zimbabwe, television here hasn't run out of programmes. But better entertainment can be found in following the tweets of exiled former Information Minister Professor Jonathan Moyo.

Moyo's latest contribution is to accuse the Chinese Chargé d'Affaire in Harare, Zhao Baogang, of meddling in the political affairs of Zimbabwe. Baogang had tweeted that Zimbabweans are only dying from coronavirus in the UK and not in China. (He didn't mention that Africans had been chased away from China . . .) Baogang further asserted that sanctions harmed Zimbabwe more than the virus.

Moyo said in response: 'This revolutionary Chinese friend of the rogue regime is undiplomatically and proudly celebrating Zimbabwean deaths in the UK due to Covid19 in such an insensitive way that would get him sent back to his racist homeland in any other country with a proper and legitimate government!' After Baogang deleted his tweet. Moyo returned to the attack: 'The racist diplomat from racist China has deleted his offensive, outrageous and totally unacceptable tweet as if he does not know that the Internet, or rather Twitter, does not forget.'

Moyo said Baogang was abusing his status in Zimbabwe. 'He's blissfully unaware that Chinese

mega-deals, most of which have been signed by either corrupt or drunken officials, are even more harmful as they rob future generations!' (See: <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/zimbabwe/robert-mugabes-minister-clash-with-chinese-ambassador/>).

Next on stage was Deputy Information Minister Energy Mutodi who blamed the virus on eating 'dogs, cats, snakes, bats, monkeys, baboons and other wild life' putting the rest of the world at risk. He suggested that Zimbabwe might be able to provide beef to China instead (see: <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2020/04/24/dog-eating-chinese-exposing-world-to-covid-19-says-zimbabwe-deputy-information-minister-promises-to-increasebeef-exports-to-china/>).

Mutodi also weighed into the fuss over the Zimbabweans who voluntarily returned home from the UK and objected to being quarantined in student hostels at Belvedere Teachers' College in Harare, complaining of inadequate facilities with no running water. Mutodi rebuked them for 'trying to demand VIP treatment' and reminded them that quarantine was not a matter of choice.

On this occasion, the Vigil can sympathise with Mutodi. Zimbabweans are being deported in their hundreds from South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia. The Bulawayo Provincial Affairs Minister Judith Ncube says that city is already overwhelmed (see: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/04/65-returning-zimbos-demand-hotel-quarantine/>).

The government has responded by cutting quarantine from 14 to 8 days. But this has been criticised by the president of Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors' Association, Tawanda Zvakada, who said it risked spreading the virus as people return to their home areas.

The Vigil is pleased that the UK has given Zimbabwe US \$43.6 million to help it deal with the pandemic – the largest donation by any country. As we in the UK look out of our windows at the sunshine we can only hope that suggestions by the Trump administration that the sun reduces the strength of the virus will save us all from further suffering.

Other points

- The Zimbabwean journalist Peta Thorneycroft has sent us an article by Zimbabwean Dr Austin Jeans who thinks that climate could have a big effect on the virulence of the virus, as well the relative youth of the population (see: <https://mesomediainstitute.com/zimbabwe-and-covid19-a-tidal-wave-or-a-ripple-is-there-hope-2/>).
- Similar findings are reported in South Africa by Dr Max Price, former Vice-Chancellor of Cape Town University (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/1074-south-africa-a-nation-ravaged-by-hiv-is-flattening-the-coronavirus-curve>).
- Certainly, to our knowledge, no country in sub Saharan Africa appears so far to be among the heavily affected.
- Latest financial figures show 'fiscal indiscipline still rampant in Zimbabwe government' says the Zimbabwe Mail. It notes 'Mnangagwa seems to have learnt nothing and forgotten everything. He appears bent on reincarnating his predecessor's era of profligacy.' (See: <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/economic-analysis/fiscal-indiscipline-still-rampant-in-zimbabwe-govt/>).
- 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/zimbabwewigil/albums/72157714038659376>).
- Our virtual Vigil activist today was Esther Munyira who kindly

contributed to Vigil funds.

- For Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/> . 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>