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News that some 700 migrants from Africa drowned when their rickety boat capsized in the Mediterranean off Libya came within hours of a meeting at which the Zimbabwe Action Forum discussed the failure of the European Union and the African Union to deal with the growing crisis posed by the headlong flight from Africa and the Middle East.

Our day was spent outside the Zimbabwe Embassy protesting at Mugabe's regime on the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. But discussion at the Forum after the Vigil turned to wider issues of bad governance, prompted by our contempt of the African Union for electing genocidal Mugabe as their chairman.

Anger was only marginally less against the European Union for its pusillanimous refusal to save our children from the people traffickers. An inspiration for these hypocritical EU cowards is the British government which argues 'don't fish them out of the water – it will just encourage more to come'. All this as an African woman drowned after jumping into the waves in a desperate attempt to save her child washed overboard. And when Muslim fanatics hurled Christian refugees out of their boat because they would not stop praying to God for salvation.

The forum discussed the following ideas:

1. European countries will not agree to open their borders to all comers.
2. The lamentable state of African governments led by icons such as Mugabe will continue to drive a flood of refugees to Europe.
3. International aid to Africa is largely misspent.
4. Some of these billions of dollars could be directed at creating a UN protection zone, perhaps in north Africa, where rescued migrants could receive food and medical attention, and indeed schooling, while their asylum claims for Europe could be processed.

The Forum is to continue its discussion at its next meeting in two weeks' time but in the meantime the Vigil would welcome any feedback on these exploratory ideas.

As if to show how out of touch with reality the Mugabe regime is, the Herald would have us believe that, after 35 years of independence, Zimbabwe is poised to become a land of milk and honey – or in the paper's topsy-turvy world honey and milk.

It says: 'the Government, even in the face of harsh economic sanctions that have cost the country over \$40 billion, has made significant and notable progress . . . Indeed through the leadership of President Mugabe, honey and milk will flow in all the corners of the country. ZIM-ASSET is one policy which if embraced by all Zimbabweans will take this country to another level and position this country as one of the most performing economies in the world.' ( See:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201504180024.html>

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The Herald – Zimbabwe: Independence Supplement – Zim @35 - Yes, So Far So Good).

For his part, Welshman Ncube says 'every true patriot must be hanging his or her head in collective shame at how we got ourselves to be the perfect caricature of a failed African state with its peoples beaten, defeated, and in grinding poverty, stoked daily by the spectre of hunger and in some cases starvation while scavenging for survival, pretty much like our ancestors would do before the dawn of organized state entities. As if the collect shame of all genuine patriots was not enough punishment what is shocking to the marrow is to witness the colloquialism that President Robert Mugabe's ruling party or, should I say, his overzealous cronies in charge of their communication, choose to trivialize what is meant to be a period of objective self-reflection given that Zimbabwe is on an accelerated trajectory of self destruction. The so-called #1980sofarsogood 'celebratory' payoff line is a conundrum – a reckless bravado to deliberately mask the desperate reality of the poverty that's due to the desperation afflicting millions of Zimbabweans. (see: <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-ncube-treachery-of-1980-so-far-so-good/> – Ncube: Treachery of '1980 So Far So Good').

Like Professor Ncube, the Vigil does not share the Herald writer's sunny optimism. To us ZimAsset has from the beginning been pie in the sky. Even if it wasn't, Zanu PF would have eaten the pie anyway. President of Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe Ephraim Tapa told the Vigil: 'On today's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence we salute those who sacrificed for our freedom. What we did not know was that the struggle was to be privatised. With this came the privatisation of Zimbabwe to the exclusion of all others. This explains why 3 million people have been driven into exile, the masses reduced to poverty and the health and education systems destroyed while Mugabe and his cronies continue to grow richer. It explains why (human rights activist) Itai Dzamara has disappeared. But we have reason for hope when we

reflect on the enduring ideals of the liberation struggle: equality, justice and freedom.’

The Vigil was joined outside the Zimbabwe Embassy by Mugabe himself (in the form of Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask). He was surrounded by devils (Danny Kadiki, Deborah Harry and Admire Mhindurwa) bearing the gifts he has given the Zimbabwean people in his long reign: unemployment, starvation and terror.

It was our second day in a row outside the Embassy. On Friday we protested against the abduction last month of Itai Dzamara and also visited South Africa House to deliver a letter demanding action over the xenophobic violence (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/press-releases/682-vigil-protests-17th-april-2015>

). Activists from our sister organisation the Swaziland Vigil spent today with us and together we went again to the South African High Commission, where Zimbabwe Vigil supporter Esther Nyambi read a poem she has written: ‘South Africa stop xenophobia’. It begins ‘ South Africans let us remind you during apartheid all your neighbouring countries welcomed you with open arms’. The full poem can be seen on our campaigns page. A word of thanks to those who delivered the Zimbabwe Vigil letter to the South African High Commission on Friday: Patricia Masamba, Piyo Chigo, Mary Muteryerwa, Mary Eluwasi and Mary Ndro.

Thanks also to those who sold sadza and stew to raise more than £40 to help the Vigil: Hilda Gwesele, Deborah Harry, Epiphania Phiri and Shylette Chipangura. Epiphania has also raised money for the Vigil by making and selling greetings cards. Finally thanks to Enniah Dube who came both days and ably looked after the front table.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

**FOR THE RECORD:** 55 signed the register.

#### **EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

- **Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting.** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.
- **Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement** holds monthly meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.
- **ROHR Birmingham general members' meeting.** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April from 1 – 4 pm. Venue: Malaika House, 81 George Street, Lozells B19 1NS. For more info contact: Chairperson: Thandiwe Gwarimba 07503 512308, Vice Chair: Tino Mashonganyika 07463 272078, Organising Secretary: JaneMary Mapfumo 07412 10429.
- **ROHR Middlesbrough General Meeting.** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: Teesside University, Student Centre, Clarendon Building. TS1 3BA. For more information please contact Angeline Huni (Chairperson) on 07871367239 Helen Sibanda (Organising Secretary) on 07799574994. Everson T.Moyo (Information and Publicity) on 07479060769.

- **ROHR Executive Meeting:** Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May at 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see below.
- **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.
- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. From the Vigil it's about a 10 minute walk, in the direction away from Trafalgar Square. The Strand Continental is situated on the south side of the Strand between Somerset House and the turn off onto Waterloo Bridge. The entrance is marked by a sign at street level. It's between a newsagent and Pizza Express. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.
- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF)** meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.
- **Next Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.
- **[12 Years: Zimbabwe Association Exhibition Launch.](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/12-years-zimbabwe-association-exhibition-launch-tickets-16235246058?ref=enivtefor001&invite=NzczMTg2NS9jby1vcM RpbmF0b3JAemltdmlnaWwuY28udWsvMA%3D%3D&utm_source=eb_email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=inviteformalv2&ref=enivtefor001&utm_term=attend)** Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May from 6 – 8 pm. Venue: Oxford House in Bethnal Green, Derbyshire Street, London E2 6HG. The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery and shares the oral histories of Zimbabwean asylum seekers' experiences in the UK from 2001 to the present. This exhibition contains material from the Zimbabwe Association archive, an extensive collection of records of individual cases, legal documents, press cuttings, reports, correspondence, and TV and radio recordings. To book: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/12-years-zimbabwe-association-exhibition-launch-tickets-16235246058?ref=enivtefor001&invite=NzczMTg2NS9jby1vcM RpbmF0b3JAemltdmlnaWwuY28udWsvMA%3D%3D&utm\\_source=eb\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=inviteformalv2&ref=enivtefor001&utm\\_term=attend](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/12-years-zimbabwe-association-exhibition-launch-tickets-16235246058?ref=enivtefor001&invite=NzczMTg2NS9jby1vcM RpbmF0b3JAemltdmlnaWwuY28udWsvMA%3D%3D&utm_source=eb_email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=inviteformalv2&ref=enivtefor001&utm_term=attend)

- **Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2014** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/642-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2014>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2014 Highlights page.

- **Facebook pages:**

Vigil: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8157345519&ref=ts>

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

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.co/pages/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights/301811392835>

- SW Radio Africa's website and sound archive is being hosted on [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) . Go to the site and type in swradioafrica which will link you to snapshots of their site over the years and at the top of that page a link to their website where, under podcasts, you will find the audio.