

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/40912713624/sizes/m/> *Mnangagwa lookalikes*

The Commonwealth is reported to have agreed to a rescue mission for Zimbabwe at its meeting in London this week during the visit by Zimbabwe's Foreign Affairs and International Trade Minister Lieutenant-General Sibusiso Moyo.

The London weekly newsletter Zimbabwe Confidential says Commonwealth countries hosting exiled Zimbabweans have agreed to organize airlifts back to Zimbabwe to allow them to vote in the elections, expected in July or August.

The decision follows General Moyo's announcement that, although no date has yet been announced for the elections, it was too late to organize voting in the diaspora as Zimbabwe's diplomatic missions are hardly ever open and staff had not been approved by the Israeli Nikuv company which traditionally arranges Zimbabwe's elections.

The UK's 'fly to vote' operation is expected to be funded by its foreign aid budget and the new Zimbabwe Airways, apparently connected to the Mugabe family, will provide planes. All travel arrangements are in the hands of Vice-President General Chiwenga's wife Mary and the diaspora will cast their ballots at a special polling station set up by the military on the Agriculture Rural Development Authority seed farm she recently seized near Harare.

The Vigil has done exhaustive research and is sorry to say that this is all fake news, or what we used to call Herald or ZBC news. We are particularly sorry because this scenario is the only way we can see that the millions of people in the diaspora will be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote and because it reflects our skepticism about the running of the elections.

With only three months or so to go before the polls, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network says it is dismayed at the lack of progress in implementing electoral reforms (see: <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2018/04/19/reforms-delay-jeopardises-polls>). And now we learn of an MDC T activist being assaulted by soldiers and kidnapped in Bindura on Independence Day (see: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-133628.html>).

We at the Vigil have been busy following General Moyo's visit to London (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/press-releases/934-zimbabwe-vigil-media-release-19th-april-2018->). As we gathered outside the Embassy today there was an unusual amount of activity at the normally recumbent Embassy and we were told that Moyo was there and that it had been suggested that he should come out and speak to us. He didn't appear. We questioned those coming out and learned that it was an open meeting for the diaspora but when our activists tried to get in they were turned away. So much for 'open meeting'. It was open for Zanu PF supporters only.

## **Other points**

- After a bitterly cold early Spring, we are experiencing a mid-April heatwave and would advise General Moyo and his coterie that it looks ridiculous in London to wear a woolly scarf in this weather – even it's only in slavish imitation of President Mnangagwa who seems to have adopted the custom of wearing a scarf in Zimbabwean colours.
- Vigil activists will be outside the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House on Monday when General Moyo is to speak. Check 'Events and Notices' for details.
- Check: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/04/20/boris-johnson-says-britain-will-support-zimbabwe-return-commonwealth/amp/> for a comment from one of our activists Salani (Sally) Mutseyami on the premature nature of Boris Johnson's comments that Britain would back a Zimbabwean bid to rejoin Commonwealth if presidential elections go smoothly
- .
- Thanks to those who attended our weekday protests: Abigail Chidavayenzi, Chido Makawa, Daizy Fabian, Dennis Benton, Dumi Tutani, Eletha Mpofu, Heather Makawa, Martin Chinyanga, Mary Ngoro, Michelle Makoni, Rose Benton, Rosemary Maponga and Siphon Ndlovu on Wednesday outside the Zimbabwe Embassy and Abigail Chidavayenzi, Michelle Makoni, Rose Benton and Tozonziani Musanhi on Thursday in support of the Swazi protest outside the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.
- Thanks to those who came early to help set up: Abigail Chidavayenzi, Daizy Fabian, Isabell Gwatidzo, Heath Jiri, Chido Makawa, Heather Makawa, Kennedy Makonese, Lucia Mudzimu, Margaret Munenge, Esther Munyira, Maria Mwaruwari, Morella Nhau, Ulibile Nkwate, Simon Nyanhi and Innocent Zivhwati. Thanks to Esther, Abigail, Ulibile and Chido for looking after the front table, to Isabell, Ulibile, Abigail, Maria, Heath, Simon, Heather and Chido for handing out flyers and to Daizy, Margaret, Abigail, Morella, Maria, Ulibile and Heath for putting up the banners. Thanks to Heather for taking photographs.

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:** 21 signed the register.

## EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Protest outside Chatham House.** Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> April from 4 pm. Venue: 10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE.

Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Moyo is speaking from 4.30 – 5.30. Vigil supporters will be outside to once again press our message for reforms to ensure truly free and fair elections. For more information check:

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/zimbabwe-s-international-re-engagement-and-socio-economic-recovery>

- **ROHR Central London branch meeting.** Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May from 11.30 am – 1.30 pm. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, Contact: Daisy Fabian 07708653640, Maxmus Savanhu 07397809056, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013.

- **ROHR Reading Fifth Anniversary celebration.** Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May from 2 pm till late. Venue: Pakistani Community Hall, London Road, Reading West RG1 3PA. There will be food, drinks, music, games, prizes and raffle and ROHR Reading will be presenting food donations to local food banks. Contact: Nicodimus 07877386792, Josephine 07455166668, Shyllette 07828929806 and Deborah 07578894896.

- **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 over the past 15 years 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 for £10. All proceeds will 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.

- **Zimbabwe Action Forum** meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.

- **Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement** holds meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.

- **Facebook pages:** Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil> ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

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

