

An influential American senator, Chris Coons, has accused President Mnangagwa of not 'walking the talk' to introduce promised democratic reforms to clear the way for free and fair elections due by August.

Coons was a member of a delegation of US senators – members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee – which visited Zimbabwe early last month. Coons said that, in lengthy talks with the delegation, the president had pledged himself to promote democracy, free and fair elections, to protecting human rights and to returning to a rules-based open economy.

'But frankly,' he said, 'We've seen no concrete steps in response'. Coons added that the delay risked derailing American moves to lift sanctions against Zimbabwe (see: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-134642.html>).

Coons' comments come amid apparent differences between Mnangagwa and military commanders suggested by the chaotic Zanu PF preliminary elections – run by the military – which saw some of the President's allies defeated.

Mnangagwa's adviser Christopher Mutsvangwa has refused to accept his defeat in the primaries, complaining of an unconstitutional use of police as election returning agents, accusing them of 'uninhibited rigging'. Mnangagwa backed him up with a statement that he didn't want the police or any arm of the security establishment to help with any party function, which would amount to a flagrant violation of the law.

The Zimbabwe Independent goes so far as to say that the President and Vice-President General Chiwenga are openly fighting for 'the heart and soul' of Zanu PF (see: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2018/05/04/mnangagwa-chiwenga-power-clashes-intensify/>).

A Vigil activist just returned from Zimbabwe says the whole political process is diseased. The election campaign by all sides was largely driven by self interest to the detriment of the nation.

He told us that he had been offered some inducements by potential parliamentary candidates in exchange for financial support. 'Zimbabwean politics is just a process of opening doors to facilitate corrupt self-interest', he said. He added that talk about a free and fair election by the military backed regime was 'mere talk' in the absence of electoral reforms.

Thanks to those who came early to set up the Vigil by putting up the banners and looked after the front table throughout: Margaret Munenge, Patricia Masamba and Alice Majola.

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: 14 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR Central London branch meeting.** Saturday 19th 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 26th 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>