

The possibility of a parliamentary debate on Zimbabwe emerged at a meeting in a parliamentary committee room today organised by the MP for Reading West, Alok Sharma, who was approached by Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) Reading branch.

At the well-attended meeting, Mr Sharma mentioned the possibility of a parliamentary debate and this idea was supported by former Africa Minister Mark Simmonds who also attended the meeting, as well as another MP, Fiona Mactaggart.

Mr Simmonds said the UK government had a very strong commitment to the people of Zimbabwe and that it had a policy of 'incremental engagement with the Zimbabwe government' even though he acknowledged the 2013 elections were not legitimate. He said a parliamentary debate would be a good idea as a vehicle of bringing Zimbabwe to public attention.

Ephraim Tapa, President of ROHR, questioned the European Union's re-engagement agenda with the Mugabe regime and spoke of the plight of failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers: 'you could be sending people back to civil war,' he said.

David Mbinga of the Occupy Africa Unity Square movement (OAUS) declared himself to be 'one of the angry youth'. He said they could not wait for change until 2018, when the elections would be rigged anyway, and wanted to take to the streets. They would like the British government to

warn Mugabe that they were keeping an eye on how he dealt with protesters.

Mr Sharma suggested that we prepare a list of Zimbabwean issues which we wanted debated in Parliament and write to our MPs to promote the idea of a debate. A fuller account of the meeting will be given in our diary on Saturday.

For pictures check: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwewigil/sets/72157648054760553/> .
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