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Exiled Zimbabweans demonstrated outside the Zimbabwe Embassy and the South African High Commission in London on Friday 17th April in protest at the abduction in Harare of the civil rights activist Itai Dzamara and at the new upsurge of xenophobic violence in South Africa.

The protest came as ambassadors of SADC countries were holding a meeting at Zimbabwe House. Barriers were placed outside the Embassy and police kept guard after several incidents in which demonstrators entered the building in attempts to deliver a letter. Police said their presence followed an Embassy complaint to the Foreign Office.

Once again the Embassy refused to accept the Vigil's letter and the demonstrators were told they could not even push it under the closed front door. So we posted it at the local post office.

The letter said: '*We would like to discuss with you the abduction of the human rights activist Itai Dzamara who was seen being taken away in an unmarked car by five armed men on Monday 9th*

March. We fear that he is the latest victim of the Central Intelligence Organisation which has

been responsible for the disappearance of thousands of opponents of the Mugabe regime. Zimbabwe Vigil fears that the unbridled criminal behaviour by the Mugabe regime is stoking a fire which could consume our people. Because the Embassy has no letterbox we will deliver this letter in person. We assure you that we come with peaceful intentions and intend at all times to obey the law which recognises our rights as Zimbabweans to approach our Embassy.'

Vigil activists, who were joined by representatives of a number of Zimbabwean groups, took time out from the demonstration to gather outside the nearby South African High Commission. Amid singing and drumming they presented a letter for President Zuma protesting at the upsurge of xenophobic violence in South Africa. Unlike the hostile reception at their own Embassy, the South Africans received the letter courteously:

The letter read: 'Zimbabweans in the diaspora condemn the xenophobic attacks on foreigners in South Africa and call on your government to ensure their safety. We find it disheartening that the attacks are taking place at a time when regional bodies such as SADC are calling for closer ties among African states through the scrapping of visas. We cannot speak for other groups seeking refuge in South Africa from poverty, economic crises, war and government persecution in their home countries. But as far as Zimbabweans are concerned, we hold South Africa responsible for the desperate situation in our country caused by your unwavering support for the oppressive Mugabe regime, publicly displayed only recently during Mugabe's visit to South Africa. We warn you that until you change sides and support instead the democratic aspirations of our oppressed people you will never see an end to the tide of refugees fleeing Zimbabwe.'

On Saturday, the Zimbabwe Vigil will mark the 35th anniversary of Zimbabwe's Independence with a demand that Mugabe must go.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 31 signed the register.