

Vigil Diary – 22nd November 2008

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 23 November 2008 21:40 - Last Updated Sunday, 07 December 2008 20:59

The prospect of yet more talks under the partisan chairmanship of the late Mbeki failed to warm even the most optimistic of us at a wintry Vigil. We phoned our friends at the Glasgow Vigil to see how they were faring closer to the Arctic Circle. We were cheered to hear they were even colder than us!

ROHR activists in Liverpool are continuing their Saturday protests. Isaac Ngoro (Interim Chair ROHR Liverpool Branch) reports that they were out in the biting cold handing out leaflets and displaying placards telling the miserable story of Zimbabwe and collecting signatures for petitions.

He says many of their activists have problems getting to the protests because they cannot afford the bus fare – rather like the problem back home!

ROHR

activists in

Liverpool

would like to thank the community of

Liverpool

for the immense support they have shown since these demonstrations

star

ted.

With the refusal of Mugabe to allow a fact-finding visit to Harare by the Elders – including Mandela's wife Graca Machel – we hope

South Africa

will realise what a poisonous regime it has clasped to its bosom. The South Africans must wake up and smell the cholera. Read Cathy Buckle's letter this week 'No Welcome Mat' for an insight into why the Elders were denied visas -

<http://www.cathybuckle.com/november2008.shtml>

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We are afraid that Mbeki's garlic, beetroot and lemon potion will be no more successful with Zimbabwe

than it was with AIDS and we demand that his mandate as facilitator be revoked. If he makes any more public appearances they should be at the Hague

Vigil supporters were puzzled by suggestions that Zimbabwe's problems are being prolonged by the absence of the MDC in a Mugabe government. Speaking for our part of the Diaspora we believe no donor country will put money into the resurrection of

Zimbabwe

until Mugabe takes a back seat. The mere inclusion of the MDC in the government will not change that.

We were joined at the Vigil by Megan Redmond from Cape Town who handed out a leaflet about the demands of the South African Coalition against Xenophobia. The Coalition is calling for an end to the South African government's 'racist and xenophobic immigration policy' and particularly for the closure of the Lindela Repatriation Centre near Krugersdorp. We pointed out that the influx of Zimbabweans is likely to increase given the cholera epidemic and the widespread food shortage.

Vigil supporters all had stories to tell of the suffering back home. One said that in his home area, Mbare, 13 people had died of cholera in one week, including three from one family. People are going out to the rural areas to get water.

Standing outside a window advertising the attractions of visiting Zimbabwe

, we notice that the Zimbabwe Embassy is not warning tourists against the dangers of

contracting cholera...

We were joined by Michael Little, of the African HIV Policy Network. He was looking for young Zimbabweans who have been HIV-tested (not necessarily positive) to take part in a Pan-African group discussion on HIV.

He managed to find several people who were willing to take part.

Another visitor was Gally Kambeu, a Zimbabwean photographer who is doing a project on memories of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora. She asked us to dig up photos of our memories to bring to the Vigil next week for her project.

Last month we mentioned that a Zimbabwean journalist had been in contact with us about sueing SADC if it recognised the Mugabe regime after elections which SADC's own observers said were seriously flawed. He was back with us today and the Vigil was able to refer him to an article this week by Tanonoka Joseph Whande, a Zimbabwean journalist based in

Botswana

who regularly broadcasts on SW Radio Africa.

His article (see below) strikes a chord with the Vigil because of our campaign to get the EU to suspend government-to-government aid to SADC countries because of their failure to honour their human rights commitments to Zimbabweans. There was agreement that Zimbabweans would get no help from SADC, the African Union, the UN or anyone else so we should pursue a campaign for refugee camps to be set up in the bordering countries where Zimbabweans could get: 1) food, 2) medical attention, 3) shelter, 4) education, no longer available at home. These refugee camps would hopefully be paid for by Western governments with the money saved by suspending government-to-government assistance.

There was much discussion of the outcome of the recent Zimbabwean immigration case at the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal. Many were hopeful that it would make a difference to their asylum claims.

20th November 2008

Who Does SADC Represent? by Tanonoka Joseph Whande

Africa has so many organisations most of which are useless, ineffective and are a duplication of most others on the continent. Many as they are, these organisations all have one thing in common and that is their failure to be honest and to remain true to their own reasons for existence.

Most African countries now find themselves caught in a whirlwind because meeting the expectations of one of their own organisations violates or duplicates the efforts of the other ineffective groupings to which they are members. African organizations, because they are initiatives formed only with the approval of African presidents, have a bias towards themselves and protective of their heads of state. This is why they cannot criticize any of their own members yet they exist at the expense of the people they are supposed to be serving.

To that extent, therefore, hardly anyone appears able to believe or understand what SADC decreed on Zimbabwe. And I have certainly seen braver cowards than SADC. SADC should not exist because it is milking the life out of the very same people it is supposed to invigorate. It is a useless organisation that has still to benefit any country within its membership.

Most repulsive and idiotic to many was SADC's order that a ministry be shared and simultaneously run by two ministers from two opposing political parties and the additional directive that the protagonists form "an all inclusive government". The ridiculous directives were the climax of SADC's deliberations over the stalemate in Zimbabwe. True to their lame and useless presence, SADC did not even bother to consider and address how, under such fierce and deadly rivalry, such a feat could be achieved. Not surprisingly, the MDC announced on Friday that they rejected SADC's rulings.

But Arthur Mutambara, eager to short change the nation and to reap where he did not sow, quickly responded by calling Tsvangirai "foolish" and "un-strategic" for not accepting the SADC recommendations which even a toddler would sneer at. Desperate and impatient to be included in any settlement, Mutambara went on to tell those critics who are calling him a spoiler 'to go hang.' We won't go hang but maybe Mutambara himself should. We are dealing with something much more serious than batteries for his robots.

Let's not spend too much time on spoilers. I offer that SADC should disband before it causes more embarrassment to both itself and Africa. One of these days, their ineptitude and misguided decisions are bound to spark a civil war in a member state.

They have even contaminated one Arthur Mutambara and gave him more worth than he deserves outside a laboratory.

SADC's lack of direction has made the organisation totally irrelevant to current issues bedeviling

the region.

The inept SADC “diplomats” are highly paid. As of 2004, the salary of SADC Executive Secretary stood at US \$82,000. He has a massive double story house being built for him behind State House in Gaborone. Yet they do not appear to be serving the interests of SADC citizens but those of some unknown masters elsewhere. Even SADC member states flout the organisation’s regulations with impunity. No one listens to SADC, not even SADC itself.

SADC lacks authority. It does not appear as if it was formed to tackle problems in the region but to provide comic relief to dictators as they take a rest from their constant abuse of citizens in the region. That and SADC’s reluctance to criticize its presidents and heads of state have left the region with an organization that exists quite expensively but one not providing any tangible service to the region that is so much affected by so many ills.

We hardly heard about anything SADC did when Mozambique was devastated by floods. SADC did absolutely nothing when SADC citizens turned against each other in South Africa in the infamous murderous spree that came to be referred to as ‘xenophobia attacks’. SADC has stood by and watched the mayhem in Swaziland as a so-called king molested his own people and, by today’s standards, abused school girls in the name of an outdated tradition.

SADC played no role in the DR Congo war which, once again, has just returned to haunt the region and Africa again. Even in

Botswana

where the

Botswana

government was having an argument with some of its minority citizens of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, SADC shut its mouth and pretended not to hear or see.

If SADC cannot interfere and assist in the internal affairs of its member states, what is their mandate and how do they execute it?

Angola, a member of SADC's own so-called troika responsible for regional Politics, Defense and Security, has just marched into DR Congo again on the side of their fellow head of state and it was not a SADC decision. Even embattled Mugabe, thrown a 'lifeline' by SADC only last week, has also marched back into the DRC without SADC's mandate.

And last Thursday, Botswana's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Phandu Skelemani, told parliament that although decisions are reached by consensus "after which they reflect the collective position of the organisation", Botswana did not go along with decisions that SADC pronounced on Zimbabwe, saying, "It would be remiss of us if we did not express our strong reservations/disagreement, as we did during the Summit, regarding the co-management of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Zimbabwe)." Botswana publicly differed with SADC on such a cowardly pronouncement.

"The co-management of a ministry by two Ministers from different parties is unrealistic, impracticable and unworkable," said minister Skelemani.

And also at the Summit, SADC Chairman, South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, asked Mugabe to leave the room so that they could deliberate on the Zimbabwean issue. Like everyone else in Africa, Mugabe simply refused to listen to 'SADC' and stayed, forcing SADC to debate the issue in Mugabe's presence.

Even SADC's own leaders did not find it worth their time to attend the circus. Only five (plus the host president) out of SADC's 15 Heads of State cared to attend this "summit".

Blunders, mindless and short-sighted decision making, partiality, fear of criticising member states, appeasement and inability to formulate and adhere to policy, continue to plague SADC. The organisation is not helping the region and the millions of dollars spent on it are better used were the monies channeled to development projects in the region.

While Zimbabwe is SADC's most glaring failure, it is still difficult to see any country in which SADC can claim they made a difference. SADC has failed to justify its own existence.

The heart of the matter, therefore, is that donor organisations, the EU, the US and other funders of SADC should withhold funds from SADC countries that continue to retard good governance and that continue to support the murder, abuse and the starving of innocent people in countries such as Zimbabwe; they should just withhold their money.

Whoever is funding this moribund organisation should hold on to their wallet and put their money to better use in this region that cries out for help and leadership.

SADC should just disband. It is time to punish the supporters of evil leaders. And withholding of funds is a language that screams louder than the crackling of lightning.

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For latest Vigil pictures check the Flickr link in the right hand column.

FOR THE RECORD: 118 signed the register.

FOR YOUR DIARY:

* **Central London Zimbabwe Forum.** Monday, 24th November at 7.30 pm. Nick Oakeshott, barrister and campaigner at Asylum Aid and James Deavin of Howe and Co Solicitors will speak about the recent landmark decision (RN case) by the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal.

Venue: D

ownstairs at the Bell and Compass, 9-11 Villiers Street, London, WC2N 6NA, next to Charing Cross Station at the corner of Villiers Street and John Adam Street.

* **ROHR members' meeting in Stoke-on-Trent.** Saturday, 29th November, 13.30 – 17.30.

Venue: Shelton Centre, Room 2, Crowther Street, Stoke-on-Trent

, ST4 2ER. Contact: J Zhira 0784896347, A Chivhimbo 07908447037, F Muchibwa 07746628397, P Mutema 07850462301.

* **ROHR members' meeting in Wakefield.** Saturday 29th November. Venue: Celandine Close, Carlton Glen, Pontefract, Wakefield, WF8 2SL. Contact: D Mugoni 07748828913, B Sikosana 07940181761, P Karuwa 07908075149.

* **ROHR launch meeting in Bournemouth.** Sunday, 30th November 08, 13.30 – 17.30.

Venue: East Cliff United Reformed Church, Holdenhurst Road

, Bournemouth
BH8 8AW

. Contact: R C Mkanda 07886707953, A Nzimba 07917458873 or P Mapfumo- 07932216070 / 07533831617.

* **ROHR launch meeting in Hatfield.** Saturday, 6th December, 13.30 – 17.30. Venue: The Memorial Hall, French Horn Lane, Hatfield AL10 8AQ. Contact: Emilia Muradzikwa on 07886098012, Mary Muradzikwa 07920170620, Phillip Chakanetsa 07988496771 or P

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* **Next Glasgow Vigil.** Saturday, 6th December 2008, 2 – 6 pm. Venue: Argyle Street Precinct.
For more information contact: Patrick Dzimba 07990 724 137, Tafadzwa Musemwa 07954 344 123 and Roggers Fatiya 07769 632 687

* **Zimbabwe Association's Women's Weekly Drop-in Centre.** Fridays 10.30 am – 4 pm.
Venue: T he Fire Station
Community and ICT Centre,
84 Mayton Street

,
London
N7 6QT, Tel: 020 7607 9764. Nearest underground:
Finsbury
Park

. For more information contact the Zimbabwe Association 020 7549 0355 (open Tuesdays and Thursdays).