

The Vigil felt vindicated at the announcement this week that the Zimbabwe regime has agreed an amnesty for some 1,500 prisoners. We are often asked by passers-by what we hope to achieve. A group of former Zimbabweans came past and asked us this very question today. Well, we think that by our amnesty campaign alone we have saved some lives.

We launched our campaign on Independence Day (18/04/09) following an SABC television report on the horrific conditions in Zimbabwean jails. Our proposal was initially derided by the regime and we are glad that they have now seen the light.

We continue to demand that Zimbabwe imprisons only the number of people it can cope with humanely.

Ahead of the SADC summit in Kinshasha, the Vigil sent two petitions to the organisation's Executive Secretary, Dr Tomaz Augusto Salomão, with a request that he draw them to the attention of SADC leaders. The petitions, signed by thousands of people, were:

1. We call upon the Southern African Development Community – as guarantors of the Zimbabwe power-sharing agreement – to put pressure on the new Zimbabwean government of national unity to stop the blatant abuse of human rights of prisoners in Zimbabwe who are dying of starvation, disease and torture.
2. We call upon the Southern African Development Community – as guarantors of the Zimbabwe power-sharing government – to put pressure on President Mugabe to honour the agreement. More than six months into the unity government, Mugabe is still resisting a return to the rule of law, deterring essential foreign development aid and investment.

As for hopes that SADC would act honourably on Zimbabwe, we are not optimistic. We were particularly offended by the patronizing tone of South Africa's Director-General of International Relations and Co-operation, Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba, who said 'Congo will struggle (as the new chair of SADC) – but it could benefit from the experience'. Great! So much for Zimbabwe – a toy for the Congolese to practice on.

Zimbabwe Vigil Diary – 5th September 2009

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 06 September 2009 16:07 - Last Updated Monday, 14 September 2009 22:30

We were encouraged that a former senior British diplomat to Zimbabwe dropped by and signed the following petition : ‘A petition to the UK government: We welcome the UK’s humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe but call on the UK government to withhold development aid until it is confident that the money will benefit the people rather than the corrupt Mugabe regime.’

We were joined at the Vigil by two human rights campaigners, one English and the other American. One topic of conversation was the possibility of a citizen’s arrest should the European Union again allow entrance to someone on the targeted sanctions list.

We were unhappy that Foreign Minister Simbarashe Mumbengengwi was allowed in on Tsvangirai’s visit and do not want to allow this to go unchallenged in future.

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One reason we all come to the Vigil is because of the warm support we get from passers-by. An American came by and gave us a wad of one hundred trillion (100,000,000,000,000) Zimbabwean dollar notes. We decided to sell them at one pound each but we were so successful we will, in true Zimbabwe inflationary style, raise the price to £5 next week.

Another visitor was our friend Steve Garvey, a teacher at Dolphin School in South London. He raised money for the Vigil by running the London

marathon and together with efforts by his pupils gave us some £900. Today he brought along another contribution from one of his pupils, Ben Fletcher, who single-handedly raised £56.

We took the opportunity to discuss with Steve how we are using this money – we are in the process of buying sports equipment and stationery for Zimbabwean schools.

It was good to hear from Mike Auret this week. He told us about his new book due to be published this month. See ‘Events and Notices’ section for details. (This replaces our ‘For your Diary’ section so that we can include notices and not just diary items.)

We were pleased that our attendance held up despite two rival attractions – Zimfest and an MDC UK meeting on the 10th anniversary of the MDC called to discuss missing funds.

Thanks to Sue Toft who brought ‘Mugabe Must Go’ wristbands which proved very popular.

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Thanks also to Josephine Zhuga and George Mapanda who were waiting ahead of the start of the Vigil to help set up.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/>

FOR THE RECORD: 97 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

· **ROHR Northampton and Kettering general meeting.** Saturday 12th September from 1.30 – 5.30 pm. Venue: St Mary's Church, Abbey Road

, Northampton

, NN4 8EZ

. ROHR UK Executive present. Contact: Norian Chindowa
07954379426

, A Chimimba

07799855806

, Willard Mudonzvo

07591686724

, Marshall

Rusike

07884246888

, Hazvineyi Masuka

07795164664

. P Mapfumo

07915926323

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07932216070

· **ROHR Birmingham general meeting.** Saturday 12th September at 2 pm. Venue: Bisho p mer Church

, 28 Handsworth New Road,
Birmingham

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B18 4PT. Contact: Adrey Marere

07788797365

, Tsiti Mavhura

07932477842

, Morris Mutanga

07882602249, P Mapfumo 07915926323 or Des Parayiwa 07815565335

· **Zimbabwe Worship Service.** Sunday 27th September from 10.30 – 12.00 followed by Zimbabwean food from 12 – 3 pm. Venue: Elim Christian Centre, Dews Road

,
Salisbury

SP2 7SN

. Zimbabwean speaker. Contact:

Adrian Smale

, 01722 770024,

adriansmale@virginmedia.com

,
www.elimsalisbury.org.uk

· **Zimbabwe Vigil – 7th Anniversary.** Saturday 10th October at 6.30 pm. The Vigil started on October 2002 and we are marking this anniversary on the nearest Saturday to that date.

12th

There will be a social gathering after the Vigil, downstairs 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 West Bromwich general meeting.** Saturday 31st October from 1.30 – 5.30 pm. Venue: St Peters Church Hall, Whitehall Road, West Bromwich B70 0HF. ROHR Executive and a well known lawyer present. Contact Pamela Dunduru 07958386718, Diana Mtendereki 07768682961, Peter Nkomo 07817096594 or P Mapfumo 07915926323 / 0793221607

· **Zimbabwe Association's Women's Weekly Drop-in Centre.** Fridays 10.30 am – 4 pm. Venue: The Fire Station Community and ICT Centre, 84 Mayton Street

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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).

· **From Liberator to Dictator by Mike Auret.** This is a personal account of the unravelling of Zimbabwe, written by an insider who was prepared to keep faith with Robert Mugabe until it was almost too late. Michael Auret served for many years on Zimbabwe's respected Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace, which worked tirelessly to defend human rights in that country. In this absorbing memoir, he traces his involvement in the politics of his country, from his days as an opposition MP in Ian Smith's Rhodesia to his involvement with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and his election as MP for Harare Central in the brutal election of 2000.

http://www.newafricabooks.co.za/books_detail.asp?ID=499

· **Strategic Internship for Zimbabweans** organised by Citizens for Sanctuary which is trying to secure work placements for qualified Zimbabweans with refugee status or asylum seekers. Further information: <http://www.citizenforsanctuary.org.uk/pages/Strategic.html>

or contact:

zimbabweinternship@cof.org.uk