

There was a good turnout at one of the coldest Vigils ever. After several days of snow the sky was clear but even singing and dancing couldn't keep us warm as the temperature hovered around zero.

We united in wishing a happy Christmas to our families and friends at home and to our supporters everywhere. We had the privilege of meeting two of them in London this week: Jestina Mukoko, the human rights activist, and Ben Freeth, the farmer targeted by Mugabe's thugs.

Several Vigil members attended a meeting at the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum addressed by Jestina ( <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/sets/72157623036066442/> for picture). She expressed gratitude to the Vigil for our support when she was in prison being tortured and spoke of 'unsung heroes'. Jestina warned that the Mugabe regime had learned nothing from her case and were continuing to perpetrate atrocities.

Other Vigil supporters spoke to Ben Freeth at a private screening at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of a documentary about his persecution 'Mugabe and the White African'.

He also expressed thanks to the Vigil for our work in continuing to expose the absence of the rule of law in

Zimbabwe

. This award-winning film will be shown all over the world and will do much to puncture the Zanu-MDC propaganda that things are returning to normal in

Zimbabwe

. People will wonder, if this type of behaviour is 'normal', what kind of country

Zimbabwe

is.

Well, in keeping with the season, the Vigil hopes that Christmas will bring us good news of political progress. But we know that Santa Claus often disappoints and we have no great expectations. In fact we were not surprised to read suggestions of new concessions by the MDC. One report (see: <http://www.theindependent.co.zw/local/24787-joc-wont-go-zanu-pf.html>) speaks of them agreeing to get SADC to approach Botswana and Madagascar to stop relays of

SW Radio Africa

and VOA, a joint demand for the end of targeted sanctions and moves to force NGOs to

channel funds through the government – to our mind all ludicrous suggestions.

Our wish for 2010 is that the MDC resists being incorporated by Zanu-PF and that SADC plucks up courage and orders Mugabe to implement the agreement he signed 15 months ago. But as we all know New Year wishes seldom come true.

Our partner organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) took part in two demonstrations to mark international human rights day. The organisation's Secretary General, Tichanzii Gandanga, spoke to a crowd of about 1,000 people in Bindura on 11<sup>th</sup> December. He said the coalition government had a long way to go to achieve a genuine spirit of inclusivity. ROHR was also one of the organisers of a meeting in Gweru the following day when singing demonstrators marched to Town House to protest at the human rights situation (see reports on: [www.rohrzimbabwe.org](http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org) ).

Some other points:

- We will be meeting next Saturday as usual although it's Boxing Day. Be warned that transport might be affected, but many supporters are determined to gather despite everything.
- We were happy to welcome again the whole of the Pedzeni family from Bedford (mother, father and their 3 grown-up children – June, Tendai, Ashley, Ada and Atipa).
- A cameraman from a Polish television station spent the afternoon with us filming interviews about refugees. We explained that, despite the propaganda, Zimbabweans still suffered under a repressive regime.
- One supporter gave us a harrowing account of the recent arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of her mother. We are not at liberty to divulge any further details in case of repercussions but we were horrified at her treatment.
- Happy 3rd birthday to faithful attender Zizi, son of Vigil co-ordinator Dumi Tutani and his wife Gugu.
- Thanks to Vigil stalwarts Gladys Mapanda and Josephine Zhuga who were there at the start, organised the setting up of the Vigil and manned the two tables.

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

**FOR THE RECORD:** 152 signed the register.

**EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

· **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

,  
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).

· **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. For information: <http://www.citizensfor Sanctuary.org.uk>

[orsanctuary.org.uk/pages/Strategic.html](http://www.citizensfor Sanctuary.org.uk/pages/Strategic.html)

or contact:

[zimbabweinternship@cof.org.uk](mailto:zimbabweinternship@cof.org.uk)

.