

A busy week for the Vigil combating pro-Mugabe propaganda but with the ironic outcome of being apparently on the same side as Mugabe as far as the timing of elections is concerned. Mugabe now seems to agree with us that Zimbabwe should have elections in the two-year timeframe envisaged in the GPA; the sooner the better as far as we are concerned – provided that the international community can ensure that the elections are free and fair.

This was the message the Vigil put to President Zuma on Friday when we confronted him on his arrival at South Africa House at the end of his disastrous state visit to the UK. His appeal for the lifting of targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his gang went down like a lead balloon. It made him seem out of touch with reality. Here's what the Times said in a leading article on the day of our demonstration: 'Jacob Zuma is hard to take seriously, but his support of Robert Mugabe is a disgrace'. Check:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article7050415.ece

Our stunts captured public attention, particularly Vigil management team member Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask displaying various placards for the cameras: 'Thank you Zuma', 'Bring me my machine gun' and 'Have another wife on me' – in gratitude for Zuma's support. We adorned our Mugabe with a row of shiny horse brasses for lack of suitable medals.

But the real message to Zuma was in the spontaneous booing from more than 100 Zimbabweans and the chant of 'Shame on you' when he arrived. We were joined by some South Africans who shouted something like 'Ag Ag Zuma is Kak', whatever that means.

Zuma could not go up the red carpet without acknowledging our protest and the High Commission undertook to pass on to him our petition which was delivered by Luka Phiri and Gugu Tutani of the Vigil management team: '**Petition to President Zuma of South Africa:** After a year of the Zimbabwean interim government it is clear that it is going nowhere so we call on President Zuma, as mediator for the Southern African Development Community, to arrange free and fair elections in Zimbabwe as soon as possible'.

It was accompanied by the following letter: 'We appeal to you to arrange early elections in Zimbabwe

. We are aware that politicians in

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Zimbabwe

don't want new elections until they have had their fill at the trough but we believe that the situation can only worsen until there is a democratically elected government in place. What Zimbabweans want to know from you is how SADC can ensure that the elections are free and fair, given that Zanu (PF) has already reactivated militia bases and refuses to implement the GPA.'

Communicating with the South African High Commission this week was a struggle. When we finally spoke to someone they tried to dissuade us from holding our protest saying they were on our side and we shouldn't embarrass President Zuma . . .

Our demonstration was widely covered in the media.

- Vigil co-ordinator Dumi Tutani was interviewed in English and Shona by Studio 7, Voice of America.
- Luka gave interviews to the same broadcaster in Ndebele and English.
- Fungayi was interviewed by SABC (who came late and missed everything so we had to restage our protest for them).
- Vigil Co-ordinator Rose Benton spoke on SW Radio Africa's Newsreel programme on 5th March.

www.swradioafrica.com

- We were also on various other media including the BBC – <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8552084.stm>
- For the most comprehensive coverage be sure to see ZimVigil TV (link on our website) produced by ZBN News. Our regular supporter Godfrey Madzunga has done an excellent job as front man for the programme.

While we are talking about the media we urge you to listen to a short debate on BBC Radio 4's World Tonight programme broadcast on 4th March on this link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtl3>

. Blessing

Miles-Tendi, described as a Zimbabwean research fellow at Oxford University

, had written a piece in the Guardian advocating the lifting of sanctions:

[//www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/mar/03/jacob-zuma-zimbabwe-sanctions](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/mar/03/jacob-zuma-zimbabwe-sanctions)

. The BBC invited the Vigil's Ephraim Tapa to debate the issue with him and Ephraim wiped the floor with him.

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Other activities of the Vigil during this week were:

- Attending a meeting at the Royal Commonwealth Society on ‘The Role of the Media in Zimbabwe's Transition’ on 4

March at which the BBC journalist Sue Lloyd-Roberts spoke about her recent damning report ‘The polarised lives of Zimbabwe’s rich and poor’.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8509149.stm>

- Vigil regular Josephine Zhuga gave a passionate account of the life of women in Zimbabwe to an appreciative audience of students at City and Islington College on 3

March to mark International Women’s Day.

Other points

- Despite the promise of spring during our Zuma protest on Friday, the Vigil on Saturday was four hours of an icy wind. Brrrr . . . when will winter end!
- A lady who came by told us her cat was so aggressive she had named him Mugabe.
- Several passers-by had been deeply moved by seeing the BBC TV programme this week ‘Zimbabwe’s Forgotten Children’. One man said he had not been able to stop thinking about it. To view the programme check: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00r5ww9/Zimbabwes_Forgotten_Children/.

We were told that we were joined by actor Jeremy Irons during the singing of Ishe Komberera / Nkosi Sikeleli. Judge for yourself – picture 2128. Many famous actors have dropped by in the past including Tim Robbins, Emma Thompson and Simon Callow. We are grateful for their support.

- Thanks to Patience Thutani for her help today in setting up and helping throughout the Vigil.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwewigil/> . For the latest ZimVigil TV programme check the link at the top of the home page of our website.

For earlier ZimVigil TV programmes check: <http://www.zbnnews.com/home/firingline>

FOR THE RECORD: 168 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

· **ROHR Sheffield launch meeting.** Saturday 13th March. Venue: Ruby Lounge, 35 Carver Street

,
Sheffield
S1 4FS

. ROHR President & Executive present together with some VIPs. Contact: Prosper Mudamvanji 07846621050, Raymond B Jonga 07729472879 or P Mapfumo 7915926323 / 07932216070.

· **ROHR Oxford Launch meeting.** Saturday 20th March from 2 to 6 pm. Venue: Newroad Baptist Church

,
Bonn Square

,
Oxford
OX1 1LQ

. ROHR Founder members and ROHR UK Executive present. Contact: Wisher Mandava 07552813803, Lucia Takawira 07760315739, Lindiwe Maposa 07837788807, C Gomani 07960103752 or P Mapfumo 07915926323 / 07932216070.

· **ROHR Liverpool Demonstration.** Saturday 20th March from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: Church Street (Outside Primark) Liverpool City Centre. Contact: Desire Chimuka 07917733711, Anywhere Mungoyo 07939913688, Trywell Migeri 07956083758. Future demonstrations all on Saturdays: 3

rd
and 17th

April, 8th

and 22nd

May. Same venue and time.

· **Southwark Cathedral's hymn singing in solidarity with worshippers in Harare.** Sunday 4th

April (Easter Day). Time tba. Venue: outside the Zimbabwe Embassy.

They are singing in solidarity with worshippers who are going to be locked out of the Anglican Cathedral in Harare on Easter Day.

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· **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturdays from 10 am – 1 pm. Venue: Swazi High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB. Please support our Swazi friends. Nearest stations: St James's Park and Victoria. For more information check:

www.swazilandvigil.co.uk

· **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.citizenforsanctuary.org.uk/pages/Strategic.html>

or contact:

zimbabweinternship@cof.org.uk

· **For Motherland ENT's videos** of the Vigil on 30/01/2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeI4veVo0H0>

and

the Vigil on
26/12/2009

:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdPsBsief0s>

and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX6sv2T9gwk&feature=related>