

Zimbabwe Vigil Diary – 2nd October 2010

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 03 October 2010 15:15 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 October 2010 15:26

Next week the Vigil marks its 8th anniversary protesting outside the Zimbabwe Embassy. It will not be something to celebrate – in fact we will be wearing mourning bands for the occasion.

The Vigil was started on 12th October 2002 by a small group from the Central London Zimbabwe Forum principally at the suggestion of MDC stalwart Roy Bennett now the target of vindictive persecution by ZANU PF.

The Vigil had to affirm its independence from the MDC when the UK and Ireland Executive was high-jacked by a group which has now been suspended by the Harare leadership following allegations of corruption.

(A report on the suspended executive has still not been published by Harare , presumably because it is too embarrassing.)

In the early years our attendance – particularly in bleak winter weather – dipped to a handful. But we always believed that one person and a banner could make a Vigil. Nowadays we draw an average of more than 150 people per week and many of them travel long distances to be with us. The Observer newspaper described the Vigil as the largest regular demonstration in London

The Vigil is not party-political and welcomes anyone who supports its mission statement: ‘The Vigil, outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, London, takes place every Saturday from 14.00 to 18.00 to protest against gross violations of human rights in Zimbabwe

. The Vigil which started in October 2002 will continue until internationally-monitored, free and fair elections are held in

Zimbabwe

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We have run various petitions – notably one to the UN calling for an investigation of human rights violations in Zimbabwe signed by some 100,000 passers-by. We have also lobbied

Parliament and other bodies and staged many demonstrations.

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we are currently running two petitions:

- **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.

- **Petition to the UN Security Council:** We call on the Security Council to ensure that the next elections in Zimbabwe are free and fair. We look to the United Nations to supervise the electoral process and the handover of power to a new government and believe peace-keeping troops will need to be in place before, during and after the polling.

Both petitions have been signed by thousands of people passing by the Vigil (we do not run online petitions). From our understanding of the British government's position we do not believe it is yet necessary to present the first petition. But we are making preparations to submit the petition to the Security Council given suggestions by both Mugabe and Tsvangirai that elections will be held next year.

The Vigil has always argued that elections are the way forward and have watched with despair the misconceived preoccupation with a new constitution when what really matters are preparations for a free and fair election. Mugabe is nothing if not consistent: he wins by violence, rigging, bribes, coercion, threats, propaganda etc. It has always worked so why should he change a winning strategy? (See: JAG open letter

forum, Ben Freeth - Protecting Communities in

Zimbabwe

from Violence:

http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/sep18_2010.html

[#Z17](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/sep18_2010.html)). Mr Freeth concludes that the MDC should go on an all-out campaign to call on international peace-keepers to protect the rural voters. The Vigil fully supports the Voice for Democracy's call to immediately start putting in place structures to assure violence-free and fair elections (http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/sep17_2010.html#Z17, 'Silence of the Lambs').

Other points

- Vigil team member Sue Toft arranged, at St Mary's Church, Speldhurst, Kent, a showing of the film 'Mugabe and the White African' which documents the fight by white farmer Ben Freeth and his father-in-law to stop their Zimbabwean farm being taken by Mugabe's regime.

In the audience was Ben's mother Claire Freeth. About 70 people attended and Sue reports that many were in tears.

Sue was interviewed by the local press (see:

<http://www.thisiskent.co.uk/news/>

[won-t-stop-Mugabe-reign/article-2704389-detail/article.html](http://www.thisiskent.co.uk/news/won-t-stop-Mugabe-reign/article-2704389-detail/article.html)).

• One of our key activists attended the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) video link with voluntary returnees in Zimbabwe on Wednesday 22nd September. He reports as follows:

The three featured returnees are all running their businesses and none of them has yet suffered any persecution or had their business taken away in the name of indigenisation. One is running a poultry farm and says he has to bribe the suppliers of chicks to fulfill his orders. Another returnee invested her IOM package in her father's shop in a predominantly ZANU (PF) area – she has links to ZANU and has no reason to fear returning to Zimbabwe

. She even said that she claimed asylum after being denied an extension of her student visa. In a way she abused the asylum system in UK

. People like her are the ones who make lives of actual asylum seekers hard in the UK

. The third returnee is operating a small scale farm which he claims belongs to his cousin who is US based. This returnee went in May and now he is running a farm. It seems he took voluntary return because he knew that he would be offered a farm. Only those with acquaintances in the top ZANU brass can acquire farms. The three were asked if the political situation had affected their daily business.

They said as long as you stay away from politics you will certainly not be in trouble with the authorities. But they all agreed that the situation politically has not yet improved as expected. The GPA is not working as promised. I am not sending out a message that Zimbabweans should not take the voluntary return offered by IOM. People who are politically involved need to consider their security if they decide to go. The IOM strongly said "we are not responsible for your safety in Zimbabwe

". The destitution of some asylum seekers in the diaspora and domestic situations in Zimbabwe

are reasons that might force an individual to take the package. The IOM claims hundreds of Zimbabweans have taken the package. It would be good if all the Zimbabweans who have returned home would give us a clear picture. The three chosen may have been staging the whole event to deceive Zimbabweans in the diaspora. Contact the IOM directly to see what they are offering and make an informed decision before deciding to go back to Zimbabwe

voluntarily. For those with disputed nationality the IOM promises they will help with a Zimbabwean travel document if you can prove you are Zimbabwean.

• This week has seen Jacob Zuma appealing to the EU to drop targeted sanctions. For reasons why the sanctions should not be dropped, check: <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/>

[sep30_2010.html#Z18](#) – Opinion: Is the EU about to sacrifice Zim for Mugabe by Clifford Chitupa Mashiri

· We welcomed Josiah Sibanda and Mazwi Marshall Lujika who arrived in London at 2 am on the coach from Glasgow and were returning home at 11 pm in the evening.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 156 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organisation based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organisation on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe.
- **Zimbabwe Vigil's 8th Anniversary.** Saturday 9th October from 2 – 6 pm.
- **ROHR Liverpool Vigil.** Saturday 9th October from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: Church Street (Outside Primark), Liverpool City Centre. For details please contact: Anywhere Mungoyo 07939913688, Trywell Migeri 07956083758, Panyika Karimanzira 07551062161. Future demonstration: 9th October. Same time and venue.
- **ROHR Stevenage general meeting.** Saturday 16th October. Venue: Poplars Bandle Hill Community Centre, Stevenage Magpie Crescent,

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, Herts SG2 9RZ from 1.30 – 5.30. ROHR Executive present. Contact Jemitas Mare 07570191705, K Mashonganyika 07962383872 or P Mapfumo 07915926323, 07932216070

· **ROHR Wolverhampton relaunch meeting.** Date to be advised. Venue: Heath Town Community Centre, 208 Chevril Rise, Wolverhampton

WV10 0HP. It's time for you to join in the Struggle for Peace, Justice and Freedom for Zimbabwe

. Contact P Chibanguza 07908406069, P Nkomo 07817096594, P Dunduru 07958386718, D Mtendereki 07771708800 or P Mapfumo 07915926323/07932216070.

· **Vigil Facebook page:** <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8157345519&ref=ts> .

· **Vigil Myspace page:** <http://www.myspace.com/zimbabwewigil> .

· **‘Through the Darkness’, Judith Todd’s acclaimed account of the rise of Mugabe.** To receive a copy by post in the UK please email confirmation of your order and postal address to

ngwenyasr@yahoo.co.uk

and send a cheque for £10 payable to “Budiro Trust” to Emily Chadburn, 15 Burners Close, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 0QA. All proceeds go to the Budiro Trust which provides bursaries to needy A Level students in

Zimbabwe

· **Workshops aiming to engage African men on HIV testing and other sexual health issues.** Organised by the Terrence Higgins Trust (www.tht.org.uk). Please contact the

co-ordinator

Takudzwa

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([t](mailto:takudzwa.mukiwa@tht.org.uk))

akudzwa.mukiwa@tht.org.uk)

if you are interested in taking part.