

Vigil supporters were interested to see that an opinion survey indicates that a majority of Zimbabweans are in favour of elections this year (see: Seven out of 10 Zimbabweans want 2011 elections: poll – http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan6_2011.html#Z1). We believe this vindicates the Vigil's call for elections as soon as possible despite objections from a wide spectrum of Zimbabwean leaders.

The Vigil understands their reservations: basically that conditions are not right. But so do the people who were interviewed by the pollsters. Most of them said they feared that the elections would again be marred by violence. Nevertheless they want democracy and an end to Zanu PF tyranny.

We gathered behind our banner 'Elections in Zimbabwe Now'. Why? Because the 'Unity' government is not working and Zanu PF will never allow it to work. Instead we get MDC ministers sounding more and more like Zanu PF. If we leave elections much longer won't it be a question of voting for MDC-Zanu PF?

We too are fearful of election violence but believe that this time Mugabe will not get away with a stolen election. West African leaders have shown they will not accept this in Ivory Coast. The Vigil believes that this marks a real revolution in Africa – one which Zuma and SADC cannot ignore. No more stolen elections. The other side of our 'Elections in Zimbabwe Now' banner reads 'Zuma Save Zimbabwe'. The Vigil believes he now has no choice.

President Zuma has made it clear there is much work to be done before credible elections can be held. What the Vigil wants from him is a firm timetable for elections and tough action to prevent Zanu PF foot-dragging.

Other points

- After the bleak midwinter we are moving back to normal Vigil numbers. People were cheered by the bright sunshine even though there was a biting cold wind. Anything is better than the sodden gloomy weather we have been experiencing.
- There has been a last minute hitch with putting the ZimVigil ringtone online but we are

working on it and we'll keep you posted.

- Vigil supporters were not surprised by the slimy rise of Welshman Ncube, farm beneficiary and stabber in the back. But we are sure Mutambara has a plan B. (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/ZimVigil-Diary-Entries/mutambara-feeds-us-alphabetti-spaghetti.html>)

- As promised here is the second half of the Vigil's past year's highlights drawn from Vigil diaries from July to December. See below.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 94 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

- **ROHR Wolverhampton general meeting.** Saturday 15th January. Venue: Heath Town Community Centre, 208 Chevril Rise, Wolverhampton WV10 0HP. Contact Tsvakai Marambi 07915065171, Florence Munemo 07901733634, Flora Nyahuma 07900036702, Odius Sahondo 07771565949, P Chibanguza 07908406069,

- **ROHR Newcastle general meeting.** Saturday 22nd January from 2 – 6 pm. Venue: Warwick Court

,
Warwick
Street,
Gateshead

,
Tyne
and Wear NE8 1EY. 3 mins walk from the
Gateshead Interchange
opposite
Gateshead

Zimbabwe Vigil Diary – 8th January 2011

Written by Administrator

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Civic Centre
and Gateshead
Police Station

Free parking
available. For directions please contact Susan Ndlovu

07767024586

, Allen Chamboko

07500246416

, Kuda Derera

07411337933,

Rugare Chifungo (Coordinator)

07795070609 or P Chibanguza (Coordinator) 07908406069.

• **ROHR Nottingham general meeting.** Saturday 29th January. Venue: St Saviour's
Community Hall, Arkwright Walk,
Nottingham

No

NG2 2JU. Contact Allan Nhemhara 07810197576, Mary Chabvamuperu 07412074928 ,
Christopher Chibumu 07775888205, P Chibanguza 07908406069 or P Mapfumo
07915926323 / 07932216070.

• **ROHR Ashford Kent general meeting.** Saturday 5th February, Venue: the Star Pub,
Ashford, Kent TN24 8PA, opposite Liquid Night Club off Hythe Road, 5 mins walk from Ashford
International Station. ROHR executive members present. Contact Danmore Munyuki
07535213801, Munyaradzi Badze 07709317869, Egbert Mtengwa 07985592931 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/zimbabwevigil> .

• **'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
issue** s. Organised by the Terrence Higgins Trust (www.tht.org.uk). Please contact the
co-ordinator

Takudzwa

Mukiwa

(t

akudzwa.mukiwa@tht.org.uk)

if you are interested in taking part.

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights July – December 2010

Saturday 3rd July

The Zimbabwean Deputy Prime Minister, Thokozani Khupe, has spurned opportunities to meet the Vigil during her week long visit to London beginning on 4th July. This does not surprise us. We suspect we are seen as a noisy embarrassment by the MDC leadership as they burrow deeper into the fertile ground of Zimbabwean government corruption.

Thursday 8th July

The following appeared in the Londoner's Diary of the London Evening Standard: ***'Zimbabwean deputy PM upsets exiles:***

What not to wear to the Commonwealth Society . . . Zimbabwe's Deputy Prime Minister Ms Thokozani Khupe, who was a popular anti-Robert Mugabe figure before she joined the government after the 2008 election, is in London but has upset sometime supporters by demanding they put on their gladrags and pay up to get an audience with her. Ms Khupe spoke at the Royal Commonwealth Society in Northumberland Avenue last night. Members of the Zimbabwe Vigil, who demonstrate against human rights abuses outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in The Strand every Saturday, had been surprised to be invited to meet her face to face at a dinner after the event. The catch was the ticket price and the dress code. Leaders of the Vigil find it offensive that, with Zimbabwe

producing more asylum seekers than any other country, diners were expected to pay £25 for the dinner and to wear lounge suits or cocktail dresses . . .

Friday 9th July

Vigil supporters attended a meeting at Lancaster House at which Mark Canning, British Ambassador to Zimbabwe, spoke on “The politics and situation in Zimbabwe and the UK Government’s response”.

Saturday 10th July

The immortal Dr Pangloss was a character in Voltaire’s novel *Candide* – immortal not least because he is now working for the British Foreign Office. Pangloss was super-optimistic. Amid the chaos of the Lisbon earthquake 250 years ago he could still maintain ‘All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds’. This appears to be the attitude of the Foreign Office towards the chaos in Zimbabwe

. It sees steady progress (although at a ‘glacial speed’). There are good things happening, we are told. In fact we should jolly well think of going back to enjoy them.

A different picture emerges from a former British diplomat in Harare

, Philip Barclay, in his book ‘Years of Hope and Despair’.

Barclay has been promoting his book in

London

and points to continuing disregard of the rule of law and the increasing acquiescence of the MDC within the unity government.

Saturday 24th July

- Senator David Coltart, the Zimbabwean Minister for Education, was given a friendly reception when he came to the Vigil at the end of his visit to London – a welcome that turned to cheers when he put on our bracelet ‘Mugabe Must Go’.

Surrounded by Vigil supporters, he said ‘I know that many of you are very sceptical about this inclusive government. But I want to let you know that there is a group working very hard to make it work. Don’t write it off. But you do need to continue the Vigil because things are by no means right yet.’

- A large contingent of our supporters went to hear Mutambara speak at a London meeting after the Vigil. Apart from telling us about his massive intellect and brilliant education, he urged people with skills and capital to go home, brushing aside questions of violence and good governance.

- Another highlight was the arrival of the valiant Smale father and son team who had cycled 85 miles from Salisbury

to the Vigil in aid of a charity for Zimbabwe

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Thursday 29th July

The Vigil made the front page of the Zimbabwe Herald this week. We are mentioned in the Herald's interview with Hebson Makuvishe

,
Zimbabwe
's Ambassador to
Germany

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He reportedly says of activists in the
UK

"Every Saturday they gather at the Zimbabwean Embassy in
the
UK

playing drums denouncing President Mugabe, Prime Minister
Tsvangirai and the inclusive Government. They are then given
some money by tourists who visit the embassy in the name of
the suffering masses of
Zimbabwe

.”
.

He said he has tried without success to dissuade the activists
from carrying out such activities . . . Makuvishe, Tsvangirai's
uncle and former representative in the
UK

, tried to control the Vigil as he did the MDC in the
UK

. We can't

forget how he thundered down to the Vigil with his goons and,

oblivious to the irony, waved his fist at the Vigil Co-ordinator saying 'How dare you accuse me of being a bully-boy!'

The latest development is that Ambassador Makuvishe says he is instituting legal proceedings against the Zimdiaspora website which has published a report said to have been leaked from Tsvangirai's office which detailed alleged financial irregularities in the MDC UK and strongly criticized Makuvishe. (Nothing further has been heard of these legal proceedings . . .)

Saturday 31st July

· While both Mugabe and Tsvangirai have been seeking support from apostolic Christians, the Vigil was surprised to be joined by a large group of Zimbabwean Christians. We were grateful for their prayers – and touched when they prayed for those on our register. Dressed in white robes, they said they had come to London to spread peace. They are members of Friday Apostles 'Johane Masowe We Chishanu' and have a base in Sheffield in the north of England

· We were glad to be joined by a Vigil activist we helped to escape from Zimbabwe. He said he was picked up on a recent trip home and randomly beaten up on the way to the police station. He was held in cells for 2 days in indescribable conditions and would probably still be there if we hadn't got legal help to get him out. The experience left him 2 kgs lighter.

Saturday 7th August

‘Zuma Save Zimbabwe’ was the theme of the Vigil as SADC prepares to hold a summit meeting in Namibia. Our banners urging South African intervention have so far failed to bear fruit but we were pleased that Mugabe’s attempt to keep Zimbabwe off the agenda seems to have failed. As the recent AU Summit in Uganda showed, African leaders are all too willing to sweep Zimbabwe under the carpet on the basis that SADC has been handed the responsibility. Vigil supporters believe that, after eighteen months of Zanu-PF arrogance in refusing to implement the GPA, South Africa and SADC must now force Mugabe’s hand. The Vigil urges SADC to address the real issue: how to ensure that elections are free and fair.

Saturday 14th August

A strong supporter of the Zimbabwe Vigil has been a Swazi lady Thobile Gwebu, who in January started a Vigil outside the Swaziland High Commission in London in protest at human rights abuses in her homeland. We were shocked that the UK Home Office has seen fit to detain her for immediate deportation and people at the Vigil signed a petition

to the Home Office on her behalf: ‘

The

Zimbabwe Vigil

is appalled that her asylum claim has been turned down and that she is to be handed over to this medieval despot, who would like to spend the country’s meagre revenues on a Boeing to fly his 14 wives to the fleshpots of the world...’

Saturday 21st August

We are glad to say that the deportation of our Swazi friend Thobile Gwebu has been halted although she is still in detention.

Thursday 26th August

Vigil Co-ordinator Dumi Tutani was on a panel at a screening of ‘Mugabe and the White African’ in London on Thursday. Director Lucy Bailey was very pleased to have a black Zimbabwean’s views.

Dumi stressed that the problems in Zimbabwe

were not caused by the white farmers and the land issue but by a corrupt government determined to stay in power at all costs.

Saturday 18th September

- **Protest to mark the second anniversary of the signing of the Zimbabwean Global Political Agreement.**

Comrade Mugabe – despite reports of ill-health – was fit enough to join our demonstration outside the South African High Commission.

But mentally he seems to have lost it, judging by the mis-spellings in the poster he was carrying: ‘SADC Final: Mugabwe 10, Zumabwe 0’. But the scornful message was clear. The demonstration marked the expiry of the 30-day deadline given by SADC for the leaders of the unity government to settle the issues outstanding from the Global Political Agreement signed two years ago this month.

- We were happy to be joined by our Swazi friend and supporter Thobile Gwebu just released from detention.

Saturday 25th September

During the week the Vigil sent the following message to the South American so-called Anglican cleric who invited Mugabe to Ecuador to receive an honorary doctorate. ‘Dear Revd Dr Walter Roberto Crespo: the Zimbabwe Vigil wishes to add our support to Genocide Watch in protest at your proposal to honour Robert Mugabe . . .’

Saturday 2nd October

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 farm being taken by Mugabe's regime.

In the audience was Ben's mother Claire Freeth.

Zimbabwe Vigil's 8th Anniversary – Saturday 9th October

· Robert Mugabe drinking coffee out of an MDC mug and pouring in spoonfuls of salt was the centrepiece of our 8th anniversary Vigil – until he fell asleep. Featuring our well-used Mugabe mask, it was prompted by a report that Mugabe hadn't been able to taste the difference between sugar and salt at a recent reception for diplomats in Harare – and a picture of him fast asleep at the UN (along with some of his 79 companions!).

· Supporters gathered after the Vigil at the nearby Bell and Compass pub to discuss the way forward. Our discussions were informally chaired by Ephraim Tapa, founder member of the Vigil and President of ROHR. One subject discussed was the suggestion by the influential UK weekly The Economist

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weekly The Economist

that targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his gang should be suspended if they agree to allow international monitors to supervise the promised elections.

Saturday 16th October

The banners we have been displaying outside the London Embassy for eight years inspired posters we attached to luggage to represent the feared consequences of deportation hanging over failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers: ‘Back to Murder, Rape and Torture in Zimbabwe’ and ‘Back to Mugabe and Starvation’. Given Morgan Tsvangirai’s nauseating love-ins with Mugabe over the past 20 months, Vigil supporters were not surprised by the British government’s decision to end the moratorium on returning failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe. Whether Tsvangirai is currently flipping or flopping makes no difference now: he has been telling the world that the GNU is working and that Zimbabwe is a safe place so we could hardly expect any other decision by the British government.

Saturday 23rd October

Supporters signed the following petition to the Home Secretary, Theresa May: ‘We the undersigned, members of the Zimbabwean Diaspora in the UK and sympathisers, express our grave disquiet at the UK government’s announcement that

failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers are to be deported – even before the hearing of a test (country guidance) case is concluded’

Sunday 24th October

MEDIA NOTICE – Zimbabweans in UK say ‘Don’t send us back to Mugabe’.

Zimbabwean exiles in the UK are to stage a demonstration against deportations at a meeting to be addressed by a senior Home Office official at Lancaster House in

London

on Wednesday, 27

th

October.

Ephraim Tapa, a prominent Zimbabwean human rights activist in the UK

, said ‘It is deeply disturbing that the British government seems to have predetermined the outcome of the court case.

We did not expect this in the

UK

.’

Mr Tapa was sceptical about the findings of a British mission to Zimbabwe this year which found that ‘Zimbabwe is for many people a safer and better place to live than it was in 2008’. Mr Tapa said ‘the stolen elections of 2008 were drenched in blood.

New elections are planned for next year and we expect similar bloodshed unless peacekeepers are sent to the country’.

No Returns before Elections! – Wednesday 27th October

About 300 Zimbabweans gathered at Lancaster House for a meeting to hear a senior Home Office official Phil Douglas answer questions on the sudden ending of the four year moratorium on sending home failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers. He dismissed fears that the move would influence the decision of a team of judges presently considering the Zimbabwe

country guidance case. Few of his audience were satisfied by his explanations. There was laughter when Mr Douglas said that returned people could relocate to different areas. Many people expressed fears of renewed violence during next year’s elections. There was a cry of ‘blood on your hands’.

The British government team suggested that Zimbabwean concerns about the policy should be channelled through an organisation of their creation, the Zimbabwe Diaspora Focus Group.

The

Zimbabwe Vigil

/ ROHR’s views are that they do not want to be represented by any other group and this was reaffirmed at a briefing after the meeting to the large group of Zimbabweans who had waited patiently outside. Mr Douglas agreed to accept our petition and hand it on.

Wednesday 10th November

Meeting on Zimbabwe at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House.

If the British government has any strategy to ensure that the promised elections in Zimbabwe

are free and fair it is not letting on. That's the conclusion reached by Vigil supporters who attended a meeting at the Chatham House think-tank in London addressed by the Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, and the British Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mark Canning . . .

It was, all in all, a chilling experience of backslapping hypocrisy. Diplomacy used to be defined as being sent abroad to lie for your country.

Now you only have to go to Chatham House in St James Square

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Further light on the meeting was cast when we learnt that an honoured guest was Zanu-PF's Tourism Minister Walter Mzembe. A firm supporter of the army's involvement in politics, Mzembe was delighted by the supine gushing of Canning and Bellingham

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Monday 15th November

Vigil supporter Josephine Zhuga addressed a meeting in London of

the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

They are keen to involve Zimbabweans in their Voices of African Women campaign.

Friday 26th November

The ZimVigil TV website (www.zimvigil.tv) was launched on Friday. Thanks to Dr Tim Rusike of ZBN News who set it up for us. The website will be managed by a team selected by the Vigil and has space for videos, picture gallery, community area and blog.

Saturday 4th December

It was good to be visited by Judith Todd, the Zimbabwean human rights champion, who was briefly in London. She said how encouraged she was that we were still going and how she looked forward to reading our diary every week.

Friday 10th December

Vigil supporters took part in an event at City and Islington College to mark Human Rights Day. We are much sought after for events like this – for our singing and dancing apart from anything else.

Saturday 11th December

The day began well when we received a large box of money. Always welcome. The box came from an anonymous donor with the message: 'We heard your protest vigil needed some money – enjoy'. The message continued 'proudly printed in Zimbabwe and smuggled out to you by some brave friends'. It seems that Mugabe's personal bonker has started a new bank, the Reverse Bank.

We now have a pile of new billion, trillion and zillion dollar notes all with pictures of Gono and Grace.

Saturday 18th December 2010

Snow fell steadily in London during the morning and it was impossible to bring the Vigil paraphernalia by car. So for the first time ever we had to have a skeleton Vigil: no drums, tables etc – just the bare necessities, such as our banners reading: 'No to Mugabe, No to Starvation' and 'End Murder, Rape and Torture in Zimbabwe'.