

Four Iraqi women joined our demonstration today. After stopping briefly at the Vigil and moving on they returned and said they supported our cause and joined in the dancing. It was great to have them with us: they expressed such liberation!

Iraqis – along with Zimbabweans – are among the largest groups of asylum seekers in the UK. The Vigil makes no claim to speak for Iraqis but we both have a problem with the British Home Office, the gateway to sanctuary in the UK

Few Zimbabweans have much respect for the Home Office. In fact it is generally regarded – in the words of former Home Secretary Dr John Reid – as ‘not fit for purpose’.

In the Vigil’s experience, the Home Office is worse than this. Putting aside the corrupt activities of some of its staff (as occasionally exposed in the British courts) there is a seemingly institutional incompetence. Not a few of our supporters have had their papers ‘lost’ in this Kafkaesque nightmare (apart from the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants the Home Office has mislaid).

What prompts these remarks is a letter from a Home Office official to a lawyer acting for one of our supporters who is seeking political asylum. The official said this about a letter from the Vigil supporting the asylum claim: ‘Objective evidence from www.nehandaradio.com raised public awareness that the

Zimbabwe

vigil was exploiting asylum seekers in the

UK

and would on the payment of a fee issue a letter to state attendance at the vigil. Therefore, no weight is attached to the production of this letter’.

Our supporter’s lawyer asked for our comment on this ‘objective evidence’. Here is the response of one of our Vigil Co-ordinators.

I attach a doc with the history of why Nehanda Radio wrote the article decampaigning the Vigil (2 articles from Nehanda Radio and 2 of our diary items). As you will see on 20th June 2009

Morgan Tsvangirai addressed the Zimbabwean diaspora in the UK

and was booed off. The Vigil was accused of orchestrating this (totally untrue) and we wrote this riposte in our diary of 27th June "B

ut Vigil supporters were too fired up about another matter – the silly allegations on some loud-mouthed Zimbabwean exile websites that the Vigil and ROHR were behind the booing of Morgan Tsvangirai when he spoke to the UK diaspora in Southwark Cathedral last week.

Anyone looking at videos of the occasion will see that the angry response was prompted by Mr Tsvangirai's remarks and was spontaneous and could not possibly have been planned." You will see that we also outline our policy on asylum letters in this particular diary - and our policy is still the same now.

Nehanda Radio's article of 30th June 'ROHR & ZimVigil exploiting asylum seekers' is in retaliation for this. Even though we didn't mention them by name they recognised themselves. The article is 2 years old.

The Internet is full of low quality Zimbabwe media websites set up by people with no particular authority and their own agendas, ie they are not neutral and unbiased. I find it astonishing that the Home Office / UKBA gives such credibility to this sort of trash. Unfortunately a lot of the people working at the HO / UKBA seem to be quite low calibre . . .

We are not an organisation set up to help asylum seekers: we campaign against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe and all we can write about asylum claims by our supporters is their visibility as activists because

they attend our protests – the more they come the more visible they are. We are entirely self-funding: the charge of £10 for our letters is for admin costs to cover paper, envelopes, print cartridges, phone calls, postage etc. Anyone who works for the Vigil does so voluntarily - nobody is paid. For people who are good attenders the admin fee for letters is not charged.

It strikes me that the Home Office is being disingenuous and deceitful in using this article to discredit the Vigil. They seem to be clutching at any straw. Their policy on Zimbabwe anyway is bizarre. The Home Office must be particularly dim if they don't realise that if the Vigil was a money-making business we would certainly charge more than a measly £10 for all the trouble we go to. After all MDC leaders have been known to charge hundreds of pounds for the same thing.

For our policy on administrative costs for letters, check: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/171-zimbabwe-vigil-diary-27th-june-2009>

We are sending a copy of this diary to the Home Secretary Theresa May in the hope that she will make the Home Office fit for purpose (according to ‘objective evidence’).

We were happy to be joined by Kudakwashe Chitsike of the Research and Advocacy Unit (Zimbabwe). She had just arrived by plane from

Zimbabwe and was going on to introduce and take questions on the film 'Hear Us' about political violence against women in Zimbabwe.

Many of our supporters went on to the Frontline Club to watch the film. She was introduced at the Vigil by Wiz Bishop of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. Wiz also spoke of the London

**s
ervice of solidarity with
Zimbabwe**

**'s torture victims on 26
th**

**June (UN international day in support
of victims of torture**

) for which the Vigil was providing the choir.

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

. Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website – they cannot be downloaded from the slideshow on the front page of the Zimvigil website.

For the latest ZimVigil TV programme check

<http://www.zimvigiltv.com/>

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FOR THE RECORD: 96 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
- **ZBN News.** The Vigil management team wishes to make it clear that the Zimbabwe Vigil is not responsible for Zimbabwe Broadcasting Network News (ZBN News).

We are happy that they attend our activities and provide television coverage but we have no control over them. All enquiries about ZBN News should be addressed to ZBN News.

- **The Zim Vigil band** (Farai Marema and Dumisani Tutani) has launched its theme song 'Vigil Yedu (our Vigil)' to raise awareness through music. To download this single, visit:

www.imusicafrica.com

and to watch the video check:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QukqctWc3XE>

- **Stop the violence in Zimbabwe:
Vigil for democracy and rights.**

Monday 27

th

June from
1 – 2 pm
outside the
Zimbabwe
Embassy, 429
Strand

,

London

WC2R 0JR. This protest marks the anniversary of the fateful 2008 presidential ‘run off’ election when Zanu PF ran a brutal campaign of violence including mass rape in a bid to retain power.

Zimbabwe

may have elections within the year. We cannot let the violence happen again. The protest

is organised by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), the successor to the

Anti-Apartheid Movement.

ACTSA will be presenting hundreds of stop the violence cards to the Embassy. (Because this is a human rights event the Vigil register will be taken.)

- **ROHR Woking general meeting.**

Saturday 2

nd

July from 2 – 6 pm. Venue: Woking
Homes,
Oriental Road

,

Woking

GU22 7BE

. Contact: Sithokozile Hlokana

07886203113, Saziso Zulu 07861028280

or P.Mapfumo 07915926323 /

07932216070

- **ROHR Liverpool general meeting.**

Saturday 9

th

July from 1.30 – 4.30 pm. Venue:

Kensington

Methodist

Church

, 294 Kensington,

Liverpool

L7 2RN. ROHR national executive

members present. A well-known

immigration lawyer available to talk about

the new country guidance ruling. Contact

Anywhere Mungoyo 07939913688, Netsai

Karota 07767483180, Panyika Anselm

Karimanzira 07538534375, Sheilla

Mironga 07578541227 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>

space.com/zimbabwевigil

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- **‘Through the Darkness’**, Judith Todd’s acclaimed account of the rise of Mugabe. T
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

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- **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

(
takudzwa.mukiwa@tht.org.uk)

if you are interested in taking part.