

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2011

Links to previous years' highlights:

2010 – <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/358-vigil-highlights-2010>

2009 – <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/357-vigil-highlights-2009>

2008 – <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/356-vigil-highlights-2008> □

Saturday 15th January: We had to call for police help for only the second time in our eight years outside the Embassy. This time it was a demented pro-Mugabe Caribbean shouting abuse.

The last time we had to call for police help was when Tsvangirai's uncle Hebson Makuvise, now Ambassador to Germany, tried to hijack the Vigil.

Saturday 22nd January: Vigil supporters were overjoyed by news that management team member Luka Phiri has been granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. His face told everything: a beaming smile.

Luka has had a long struggle to get his papers, mostly because he arrived in the UK on a Malawi passport.

Saturday 5th February: Today we were visited by members of the Zimbabwe Diaspora Focus Group: Thamsanga Zhou, Lucia Dube and Martin Chinyanga. Thamsanga stressed how important it was to attend the Vigil and said that all Zimbabweans in the diaspora should work together for an end to human rights abuses in Zimbabwe and for free and fair elections.

Saturday 12th February: As Egyptians celebrated the triumph of people power, the Vigil marked the second anniversary of Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity (GNU) with posters expressing our disgust at how the agreement has rescued Zanu-PF and emasculated the MDC. We are still bewildered why MDC leaders signed up to such a flawed document. 'Two years forward for GNU – two years backward for MDC' read one of our posters. With the quasi-legitimacy conferred by the GNU, Zanu-PF is making further inroads in the UK. The Guardian newspaper reported recently that 32 suspected Zanu-PF war criminals are believed to be in the UK.

Saturday 19th February: The mystery of Mugabe's whereabouts as his 87th birthday approached was solved when he suddenly arrived at the Vigil to launch his planned two million person petition against the illegal sanctions which as you all know have done so much damage to our country by beating up innocent people, raping and starving them etc and generally sanctioning them with the aim of illegal regime change. The Commander-in-Chief and Head of Everything, Robert Mugabe (Dickson Munemo in our Mugabe mask) emerged tottering on walking sticks from Rymans Stationers next to the Vigil. He had apparently mistaken it for the optician's shop on the other side of the Embassy.

Saturday 26th February: The illustrious leader, icon, beacon, legend and philanthropist with telescopic foresight can't keep away from the Vigil. Tearing his illustrious self away from his adoring fans at his birthday celebrations, Mugabe (played by Dickson Munemo) suddenly materialized outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, London, dressed in the robes of an Arab sheik to show his solidarity with his Libyan friend Gaddafi, who is apparently running short of power at the moment. Of reports that a plane stuffed with gold was ready to take Gaddafi to Harare, the beacon and philanthropist said the great Libyan philosopher and prophet only wanted to visit his Ethiopian brother Mengistu Haile Mariam, who

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

has been sheltering in Zimbabwe for many years, to discuss how ungrateful people are to their despots.

Tuesday 1st March: President Mugabe was strung up from a tree outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London today at a Vigil in support of an attempt to stage an anti-Mugabe demonstration in Harare. We were joined by a Reuters news team, apart from other journalists, and passers-by stopped to take photos with their mobile phones. Bus drivers hooted in solidarity as Terence Mafuva in our Mugabe mask and a white shroud dangled from the branch of a maple tree (discreetly supported by a small stool). The Vigil was pleased to get a message of encouragement from Passop, the Zimbabwe support group in South Africa, who were holding a solidarity demonstration outside Parliament in Cape Town.

Monday 21st March: Zimbabwean exiles in the UK and supporters demonstrated outside the Zimbabwean Embassy and the South African High Commission in London in protest at the growing violence as Mugabe's Zanu PF prepares for new elections. Amid drumming and singing, over a hundred demonstrators outside South Africa House carried banners reading 'Zuma where is our road map?', 'Blood on Zuma's hands', 'Mugdafi stop selective justice now', 'Zuma publish election dossier now', 'AU act now', 'Zanu PF game is up', 'Mugabe stop torture, false arrests', 'Bloody SADC where are you? – wake up', 'Chihuru, Chiwenga, Shiri – Hague is waiting', 'Bloody Zuma – ungunthakathi' and 'No violence in Zim? Ask Gwisai'. A deputation was sent to the Home Office to deliver a petition protesting at new moves to send home failed Zimbabwe asylum seekers.

Saturday 2nd April: The Vigil celebrated the imminent ousting of another illegal president – Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast – whose clinging to power after losing the election last November has cost countless lives. As Ouattara's forces closed in on Gbagbo in Abidjan, Vigil supporters played the West African drama out in front of the Zimbabwe Embassy.

Fungayi Mabhunu, wearing our Mugabe mask, welcomed his Ivorian friend with the poster 'Zimbabwe – world of wonders: Mugabe, Mariam, Gbagbo? Gaddafi?' accompanied Gbagbo (played by Stanford Munetsi) bore on his back the poster 'G'bye G'bye G'bagbo'. Trailing behind the former Ivorian President was another Mugabe ally – Libya's Colonel Gaddafi – played by Paul Mathema in Arab robes. The Zim Vigil band (Farai Marema and Dumi Tutani) has launched its theme song 'Vigil Yedu (our Vigil)' to raise awareness through music. To download this single, visit website:

www.imusicafrica.com

Saturday 9th April: Vigil supporters were encouraged by indications of a change of attitude to Mugabe by SADC leaders meeting in Zambia. Have they been given the jitters by what is happening in North and West? Mugabe's arrival by 'golf cart' at the Livingstone meeting with a huge entourage of 60 (including a large medical team) clearly exposed both his increasing frailty and the big-man arrogance of Zanu PF. (Zuma was accompanied by only 12 people.)

Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu for playing the role of Mugabe arriving at the Vigil on a municipal bicycle propped up by Godfrey Madzunga and Ronald Nxumalo.

Saturday 16th April: Vigil supporters are disappointed that Mugabe's Ambassador to London has been invited to the Royal Wedding on 29th April. But the presence of Ambassador Machinga might be entertaining as he goes around Westminster Abbey soliciting signatures supporting the 2 million person anti-sanctions petition. Zim Vigil regular, Swazi

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

national Thobile Gwebu took a stronger line when she heard that King Mswati of Swaziland would be present at the wedding, travelling to London with an entourage of no less than fifty to stay at the super expensive Dorchester hotel. Thobile, who launched a Vigil outside the Swaziland High Commission in London modeled on our own protest, was able to reach a large audience by being interviewed on the BBC TV Newsnight programme which looked at the brutal repression of the recent unrest in Mbabane.

Monday 18th April: Some 150 people gathered outside the Zimbabwe Embassy to protest on Zimbabwe's Independence Day against increasing Mugabe violence. Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa summed up our mood on the 31st anniversary of independence: 'we have nothing to celebrate', he said. An anniversary card was delivered to the Zimbabwe Embassy calling for an immediate end to the violence, free and fair elections and justice for the people of Zimbabwe.

Wednesday 20th April: Following comments in the Vigil diary on 16th April, the London Evening Standard took up the matter of the invitation to the Zimbabwean Ambassador to attend the Royal Wedding. After some research the newspaper concluded that the UK would be justified in withdrawing the invitation so the Vigil sent the following letter to the British Foreign Secretary, William Hague.

'Exiled Zimbabweans in the UK represented by the Zimbabwe Vigil wish to express their disappointment that the Zimbabwe Ambassador Gabriel Machinga, has been invited to attend the Royal Wedding. President Mugabe and his corrupt coterie have rightly been placed under EU sanctions for their human rights abuses and Mr Machinga has always made it clear that he represents Mugabe and not the people of Zimbabwe or even their coalition government . .

Tuesday 26th April: ZimVigil supporters had to search Mayfair when Swazi despot Mswati and his entourage of 50 failed to turn up at London's deluxe Dorchester Hotel to stay for the Royal Wedding. About 80 demonstrators had gathered outside the hotel to support the Swaziland Vigil which had arranged a picket of protest against Mswati's oppressive rule – only to find that the Swazi freeloaders had gone to the nearby Four Seasons Hotel. Mswati had obviously got the message as members of his entourage at the Four Seasons were overheard talking about our demonstration which had attracted much media attention with protesters carrying posters such as 'Swazi King parties while country starves' and 'Royal Wedding guests are human rights abusers'.

Saturday 30th April: Vigil supporters ended another busy week picketing the farewell reception given by Swazi King Mswati. No sooner had we ended our regular Saturday Vigil outside the Zimbabwe Embassy than we were off to join our fellow human rights campaigners of the Swaziland Vigil outside the Four Seasons Hotel in Mayfair. Guests appeared uncomfortable when they saw the protest. The Swaziland High Commissioner Dumsile T Sukati jumped out of her car and hurried into the building. Despite the failure of our appeals to the British government to withdraw the invitations to the Wedding extended to Mswati and the Zimbabwe Ambassador Gabriel Machinga, we were compensated by the widespread publicity for our joint human rights cause. The Foreign Office said in a letter to the Vigil 'Thank you for your letter of 20th

April 2011 about the invite of the Zimbabwe Ambassador Gabriel Machinga to the Royal Wedding. Representatives from all countries that the UK has working relationships with have been invited to the Royal Wedding . . .'

Saturday 14th May: The demand for change is steadily moving down Africa judging from the reception given to Mugabe and other African leaders attending the installation for another term of Ugandan perpetual President Museveni. Their motorcade was assailed by stone-throwing protesters shouting 'Go to hell dictators' and 'You dictators: we are tired of you'. These messages were reflected in posters displayed by Vigil supporters.

The traditional English dancers the Morris Men made their annual visit to us and gave us a good show. Vigil management team member Fungayi Mabhunu drew a laugh from them when he said 'it was good to see Englishmen dancing like Zimbabweans'.

Friday 20th May: Zimbabwe Vigil dancers performed at a Community Event for Adult Learners' Week at City and Islington College in North London. Thanks to Dumi Tutani, Farai Marema, Wendy Ziyambi, Edna Mdoka and Moses Kandiyawo for a lively and much appreciated performance that helped to spread the awareness of Zimbabwe's human rights abuses.

Saturday 21st May: To help focus the minds of SADC leaders the Vigil has been pushing the British government to suspend aid to countries supporting Mugabe. This is a substantial amount. Britain is one of the very few countries – if not the only one – to honour the Gleneagles Agreement of 2005 under which the world's richest countries committed themselves to giving 0.7% of their national income in foreign aid. In Britain's case this will amount this year to £8.1 billion (rising to £11.5 billion in 2014 /15). All this is at a time of stringent budget cuts at home. Here is a letter the Vigil has sent to the Defence Secretary, Dr Fox who wants a more nuanced approach to how British government aid is allocated. '*The Zimbabwe Vigil notes with interest your recent comments and fully supports demands for a more flexible approach to the UK's overseas aid . . . Of particular interest to us is budgetary aid given to member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), amounting to many hundreds of millions of pounds a year. SADC has betrayed the people of Zimbabwe by pandering to the odious Mugabe regime for the past decade . . . Take, for instance, the notoriously corrupt regime in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which will feature among the top 10 recipients of UK spending in direct aid for 2012 / 2013 at £165 million. Or take Malawi, which although this year is receiving £90 million of British budgetary aid, has recently expelled the British High Commissioner for criticising President Mutharika for being intolerant of criticism. Mutharika has made no secret of his admiration for Mugabe, naming a new highway after his idol, who in turn has given the Malawian leader a stolen farm.*'

Saturday 4th June: One of Britain's best-known poets Benjamin Zephaniah joined us at the Vigil and condemned Mugabe and his betrayal of Africa. Zephaniah, born and brought up in the UK of West Indian parents, spoke to us of his disillusionment with Mugabe. He said 'I am friends with Mandela. I have only seen him angry once and that was about Mugabe when he spoke about failure of leadership in Africa.' (The Vigil remembers the occasion well because Mandela's comment followed a campaign by the Vigil and others to urge him to reject Mugabe when he visited London to celebrate his 90th birthday.) The Vigil welcomes Zephaniah's support particularly highly because we have had such difficulty getting our message over to our Caribbean brothers. It has been difficult to disabuse them of the dream we all shared and convince them that Mugabe the liberator has turned into Mugabe the monster. It was great to have Vigil team member Patson Muzuwa with us again with a party from Leicester. He was most appreciative of the support Vigil members gave him on the recent death of his mother. But we were alarmed to hear that her funeral was invaded by two truckloads of Zanu

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

PF who disrupted the proceedings. We understand this was a direct result of Patson's involvement with the Vigil.

Saturday 11th June: Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa has been elected President of the new Zimbabwe 'Yes we Can' Movement. Ephraim is also President of our partner organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe.

Saturday 25th June: Few Zimbabweans have much respect for the UK Home Office . . . What prompts this comment 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. 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

and we wrote this riposte in our diary of 27th June "But 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. 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.'

For our policy on administrative costs for letters, check:

<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/171-zimbabwe-vigil-diary-27th-june-2009>

Sunday 26th June: The London chapel of John Wesley – one of the founders of the Methodist Church – resounded to the sound of drums and African singing and dancing as exiled Zimbabweans and supporters gathered to mark the UN international day in support of victims of torture. The Vigil supplied the choir and drummers, who were energized by management team member, Patson Muzuwa, himself a survivor of torture. Our host at the Methodist world's 'cathedral' was the Reverend Jennifer Potter who has ministered in Botswana and Zambia and is Methodist 'companion' for Zimbabwe, visiting there every year. Jennifer prayed for a new dawn in Zimbabwe and reached out to Anglican friends in Zimbabwe who, she

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

said, seemed to be particularly persecuted. The service was addressed by two visitors from Zimbabwe: Irene Petras, Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and Kudakwashe Chitsike of the Research and Advocacy Unit (Zimbabwe).

Monday 27th June: Vigil supporters provided the backbone for a protest by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) against violence in Zimbabwe. The Embassy refused to accept 1,300 cards ACTSA had collected calling for an end to the violence.

The Embassy (as usual!) was closed so we stuck one of the cards under the door signed 'Zimbabwe Vigil' and listing our address as 'outside the Zimbabwe Embassy'.

Saturday 2nd July: We were visited by the Information Officer of the new Zimbabwe 'Yes We Can' movement, Arnold Magwanyata, who told Vigil supporters that the movement wanted to encourage Zimbabweans in the diaspora to join the struggle for change. Vigil co-ordinator Dumi Tutani, the Vigil's representative to the new movement, reported on a meeting it held in Manchester on 25th June. He said one strong message was a determination to empower women. Following on from our diary last week in which we wrote about criticism of the Vigil from the Home Office we have sent the following letter to Theresa May, the Home Secretary.

'A solicitor acting for one of our supporters asked for our comment on a letter from the Home Office which maligned the Zimbabwe Vigil. You will see further information in our diary of 25

th

June 2011 . . .

We totally reject the implications and challenge the Home Office to substantiate this malicious slur.'

Saturday 30th July: The Vigil has received an apology from the UK Border Agency for comments made when asylum was refused to a Zimbabwean refugee who offered a letter of support from the Vigil as evidence of activism. The comments suggested the letter was worthless because of allegations that the Vigil was a money-making organization ripping off asylum seekers. The Border Agency's Director of Appeals and Removals Phil Douglas replied to our complaint: 'I apologise at the outset for the offence this has understandably given.' Mr Douglas went on to say that the comments referred to were not based on information accepted by the Border Agency. The Vigil has also been assured by the British government that it is to try to overturn a legal decision to grant a CIO torturer permission to remain in the UK, which was given on the grounds he might be tortured if returned to Zimbabwe! Foreign Secretary William Hague said in a letter in response to our representations that the government's policy was that the UK should not be a refuge for war criminals.

Saturday 6th August: Details of how elements in Zimbabwe are trying to hi-jack our sister organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) were given at the Vigil by ROHR's President, Ephraim Tapa. He said ROHR was becoming increasingly prominent with its non-party political campaign for human rights but now that it was attracting the interest of potential donors a small group had unconstitutionally tried to take it over. Four people have consequently been expelled. One of our supporters Louisa Musaerenge said she had received the following threatening email apparently targeting Vigil supporters: ' Mur ikupedza nguva muchimba ku London pasi peziso ra baba Mugabe kupusa chose ticha kubvumburisai one by one you want boiling oil over you heads your brain has bin frozen there come here we sort you out dogs of english man. They laugh you all the time this whities, you bin used to wipe ass come and agriculture here home is gud'

Saturday 27th August: Africa's new King of Kings, President Mugabe, Defender of the Faith (except Anglican), emerged from the Zimbabwe Embassy in London on Saturday on his way to Tripoli in support of deposed King of Kings Muammar Gaddafi, who has fallen on hard times. Brandishing a rifle, Mugabe (played by Fungayi Mabhunu) was dressed in classical Arab attire so that he would not be mistaken for one of what Gaddafi describes as 'Libyan rats'. Before disappearing in his golf cart down one of the tunnels leading to Gaddafi's compound, Mugabe said everyone was happy in Libya until the Western gangsters started bombing the place to find more oil. 'Don't they know it doesn't spring from rocks?' Asked whether Gaddafi had been annoyed when Zimbabwe didn't pay its \$360 million bill for oil, Mugabe said: 'That's all oil under the bridge now. I explained to him that Zimbabwe had no reason to pay as we had used up all the oil'.

Saturday 3rd September: The Vigil has been told by sources in the Swaziland High Commission how King Mswati was thrown into a panic by the April protests against him in London. Apparently, when the organiser of the Swazi vigil, Thobile Gwebu, was threatened with deportation from the UK, two senior police officers were sent over to London in the hope of taking custody of her. Fortunately she has been allowed to stay in the UK. We were also informed that the king's last minute change of hotels for the Royal Wedding in London was because the Dorchester asked him to go elsewhere because of the vigil we helped organise outside.

Saturday 10th September: The Vigil was pleased to hear of plans for the Archbishop of Canterbury to visit Zimbabwe . . . Apparently he is seeking a meeting with Mugabe. This has been criticized in the British press, with some commentators saying it will provide a propaganda opportunity for Mugabe. We took a different view and decided to send the Archbishop the following letter: '

Dear Dr Williams: The Zimbabwe Vigil welcomes your planned visit to Zimbabwe next month in support of besieged Anglicans under the rod of the unelected president Mugabe . . . The persecution of Anglicans in Zimbabwe has continued too long with little condemnation from the Christian community at large. Even brother churches in Zimbabwe have scurried from the crucifixion . . . We disagree with those who question the wisdom of your visit. We are encouraged that you share our pain, though we have no doubt that Mugabe will seek to use your visit for propaganda purposes. We do not believe his regime – steeped in lawlessness, terror and greed – will make any meaningful concessions at your request. But we pray that your visit will highlight to the world the plight of our suffering brothers and sisters at home.'

Saturday 17th September: The Zim Vigil band reflects our frustration with lack of progress in their latest postings of two new protest song videos (Shungurudza and Zimbabwe Blood Diamonds) on youtube (<http://Shungurudza.notlong.com> and

<http://blooddiamonds.notlong.com>

). Band members Farai Marema and Dumi Tutani have been interviewed by Zim Diaspora, check:

<http://zimdiaspora-zimvigilband.notlong.com>

Saturday 24th September: Vigil supporters will be aware that there has been an attempt to undermine our sister organisation ROHR (See: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/press-releases/325-zimbabwe-vigil-statement-on-rohr->

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

). To counter this, ROHR President Ephraim Tapa and ROHR account administrator Rose Benton attended a meeting on the sidelines of the Vigil to share details of ROHR's finances with representatives of the ROHR UK executive. Save for two small errors, which were to be clarified with ROHR Head Office, there were no financial irregularities in the accounts. One of the members quipped afterwards: 'this smacks of a smear campaign.'

Saturday 1st October: The Zimbabwean diaspora in the UK is growing increasingly anxious at signs that the Home Office is stepping up efforts to deport Zimbabweans on the grounds that conditions at home have improved. One of the Vigil's regular supporters Shamiso Kofi has been detained and told a ticket to Nairobi has been booked for her on Kenyan Airways on 4th

October. At the Vigil today, we ran the following petition to the UK Border Agency, part of the Home Office:

"
We, the undersigned, are worried about the proposed deportation of one of our regular supporters, Shamiso Kofi. She is one of our most passionate dancers and singers and . . . there are serious concerns about her safety . . . ' A

harrowing picture of the Zanu-PF mentality was given in a new play produced in London by Chickenshed Theatre and attended by a Vigil group including Ephraim Tapa who was especially invited because of his leadership of the new Zimbabwe We Can movement. The play 'The Rain that Washes' was based on the experiences of Christopher Maphosa (who has attended the Vigil)

Saturday 8th October: Vigil supporter Shamiso Kofi was not deported to Zimbabwe as planned on Tuesday night. After a harrowing experience, Shamiso was taken off the flight from Heathrow with her three escorts and returned to Yarl's Wood detention centre. We marked our 9th anniversary with Vigil management team member Fungayi Mabhunu, wearing our Mugabe mask, standing at the front desk with wife Grace (played by Josephine Zhuga). Mugabe was holding the following petition: 'Petition to the Unfair World: The oppressed people of Zimbabwe demand an end to the illegal and unfair sanctions against me and my Zanu PF cronies: We have redistributed farms to deserving nearest and dearest, We have transferred businesses to indigenous ministers, Our security forces make sure there are no London-type riots, We have cleared slums by pulling down houses, We have liberated our diamonds, We have nationalized the Anglican Church. NO TO ZIMVIGIL LIES – YES TO MUGABE'S REVOLUTIONARY TRUTH. Mu

gube had managed to get signatures from Gaddafi (Libya), Gbagbo (Ivory Coast), Mubarak (Egypt), Ben Ali (Tunisia), Assad (Syria), Saleh (Yemen) and Mutharika (Malawi). Mugabe also promenaded around the Vigil with the following placards:

Mugabe (estimated wealth \$1 billion) supports the right of excommunicated Bishop Kunonga to seize Anglican churches, Mugabe says no to Western human rights: yes to murder, rape and torture, Mugabe scorns British aid: says starvation a product of neo-colonialism, Mugabe (16 farms) supports the right of West London nurse Irene Zhanda to seize a farm in Zimbabwe.

Saturday 15th October: A new attempt is to be made on Thursday to deport Vigil supporter Shamiso Kofi despite the violent failure of the first attempt earlier this month. There is speculation that the UK and South Africa are making a concerted attempt to deport Zimbabweans to put pressure on the Mugabe regime. Shamiso is one of the first Zimbabweans to be targeted for forcible return since the UK ended its moratorium on sending back failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers. It comes amid reports from South Africa that hundreds of

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

Zimbabweans are being sent back.

Saturday 22nd October: Shamiso's new lawyer succeeded in stopping the second attempt to deport Shamiso and is working on securing her release from Yarl's Wood detention centre. The Vigil was pleased to be given prominent billing at a Black History Celebration at City and Islington College, Finsbury Park. Vigil supporter David Kadzutu (who is also the International Relations Secretary of the Zimbabwe We Can Movement) said that after colonization, Africans were now fighting oppression by their own people. A troupe from the Vigil danced, sang and drummed.

Saturday 5th November: The Vigil is appalled that the EU has cleared the way for Zanu PF to expand massively its diamond swindle. We believe the EU's craven capitulation to commercial interests will undermine fatally any attempts to get Zanu PF to honour the GPA. With virtually unlimited funds at Zanu PF's disposal, Vigil supporters believe it is farewell to hopes of free and fair elections.

The Vigil is happy to report that Shamiso Kofi has been released from detention after the government's failure to deport her. The Vigil has received a reply to our open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury about his visit to Zimbabwe. The Archbishop expresses his 'deep and sincere gratitude' for our support. We were joined by about 100 uniformed members of the Chinese spiritual organisation, the Falun Gong, whose demonstrations against communist oppression we have supported. We discussed with them our disquiet at Chinese involvement in the Marange diamond racket and other matters such as arms sales to Mugabe.

Saturday 12th November: Only days after police in Harare made threats against a member of the Vigil management team, three obvious CIO operatives were photographed at the Vigil. The three men were spotted emerging from the side door of the Embassy . . .

Ironically, the photos were taken by Fungayi Mabhunu, who only this week received a chilling message from a contact in Harare . . . The message he got from our contact was 'don't come back'. We were glad to be joined by Shamiso Kofi, who was recently released from detention.

Saturday 19th November: The ZimVigil band's song 'Mwari torai vanoti shungurudza' (God take those who trouble us) has been

featured on SW Radio Africa's new programme 'Beyond Protest' (check:

http://www.2bctnd.net/swra_wp/?p=12503

).

Saturday 26th November: To our disappointment there was no sign of the promised Zanu PF demonstrators when a Vigil supporter went to check outside the Prime Minister's residence, 10 Downing Street, just around the corner from the Zimbabwe Embassy. Mugabe fans in the UK, led by George Shire, Lloyd Msipa and Laurence C Muzembi (brother of Zanu PF Minister Walter), had said they were to present a petition today to Mr Cameron calling for an end to the vicious neo-colonialist, racist, destructive and ineffective illegal sanctions which have deprived Zimbabweans of electricity and water, destroyed agriculture, caused potholes, prevented drugs reaching the sick and the supply of spares for ambulances and caused the drought and floods. At the last count the petition had amassed 51 signatures so perhaps the weight of it delayed the planned march from Lancaster House.

Saturday 3rd December: With the sun setting as early as 4 pm, we at the Vigil need everything we can get to cheer us up as we stand out in the cold. One of the posters in the Embassy window did the trick. Part of the 'Wonders of Zimbabwe' tourist promotion campaign, it read 'Wonder what our cultural ceremonies are like?' We couldn't help but think of Tsvangirai's on-off

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

wedding. But a canvass of opinion among Vigil supporters showed that the affair was more than a laughing matter. People were alarmed that Tsvangirai appears to have walked blindly into a Zanu PF trap and has become a laughing stock. Although there is respect for the Prime Minister's heroic work leading the MDC for the past twelve years, it was felt that he should – as the saying goes – consider his position.

Friday 9th December: An article on 5th December on nehandaradio.com (<http://nehandaradio.com/2011/12/05/zimbabwe-vigil-should-consider-their-position/>

) repeated several malicious accusations against the Zimbabwe Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR). The article is a cut and paste job from discredited Nehanda Radio articles, some dating back two and a half years, when the Vigil was blamed for Tsvangirai being booed at Southwark Cathedral in London. The latest attack is in response to our diary of 3

rd

December suggesting that Tsvangirai should consider his position as leader of the MDC, partly because of his lack of political acumen in having a relationship with a woman with known Zanu PF connections.

Saturday 10th December: Fresh from the Zanu PF conference in Bulawayo, Robert Mugabe materialized at the Vigil to demand immediate elections – preferably before his 88

th

birthday in two months' time. 'No time can be lost', he said. 'Zimbabwe is in moral danger. No woman is safe from Morgan Tsvangirai.' The aged leader, played by management team member Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask, could still wield a nifty sjambok which he brandished at Fadzai Muparutsa of

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe. Fadzai was at the Vigil with Gideon Shoko, Deputy Secretary General, Z

imbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. Gideon passed on to Vigil supporters greetings from the workers of Zimbabwe and said how encouraged he was that we were still 'pushing the struggle' after nine years outside the Embassy.

Saturday 17th December: The Vigil staged a demonstration outside the South African High Commission in London to urge President Zuma to force Mugabe to honour the Global Political Agreement. Vigil activists and MDC members stood in silence with banners reading: 'Zuma save Zimbabwe'. The demonstration reflected the Vigil's disgust at the ANC's offer to help Zanu PF in the next elections. Further evidence of the incompetence of the UK Border Agency came in a letter to a member of the Vigil Management Team who requested access to the file on her held by the UKBA. The letter said ' We have now completed the processing of that request, but, unfortunately, we have been unable to locate all of the UKBA records relating to yourself . . . '

Saturday 24th December: Inspired by videos on youtube showing North Koreans apparently weeping hysterically at the death of Kim Jong-il, the Vigil spent Christmas Eve outside the Zimbabwe Embassy practising public grieving for Mugabe. After all, we don't want to be found wanting when mourning comes. With notices explaining 'Zimbabweans practising weeping hysterically for the forthcoming death of Mugabe', Vigil supporters beat their breasts, pounded their heads against the nearest soft object (after all it was just a practice), wept controllably, heaved their shoulders and generally looked bereft at the sight of a prostate Mugabe (played by Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) lying wrapped in a shroud. We were further cheered by the vociferous support for us shown by Congolese demonstrators as they passed the Vigil on

Vigil Highlights 2011

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 January 2012 14:01

their way to Whitehall to express their outrage at the stolen presidential election in the DRC. One demonstrator broke away from the tightly-policed procession to hurl water in the face of Mugabe depicted on one of our banners 'Mugabe wanted for murder'.

Saturday 31st December: The end of the year is traditionally a time for reflection and at the last Vigil of 2011 we discussed likely developments at home in the next twelve months. Sadly they were rather pessimistic. Few people at the Vigil expect a happy outcome in Zimbabwe to 2012. There was agreement at the Vigil on the most likely options: (1) The situation could continue as it is for another year with halting progress on the constitution front, not helped by Mugabe spending most of his time flying to and from Singapore for medical treatment. (2) Zanu PF (and we include in this military leaders), desperate to see a dying Mugabe returned to office, could engineer elections by collapsing the government – for instance, arresting Tsvangirai.