

A demanding Mugabe kept all of us at the Vigil hard at it stuffing ballot boxes for the elections on 31<sup>st</sup> July. Unusually considerate, he saved us a bit of work by marking a cross against his name before handing out the ballot papers from a seemingly inexhaustible supply.

‘Don’t tell anyone, but I am Baba Jukwa’, he confided. ‘I popped over to show you how Zanu PF will win the elections. They’re in the bag. In fact, lots of bags’, he said, pointing at the sacks of rigged ballot papers that he brought in his sports car. ‘With only a week to go I haven’t seen a single vote for Tsvangirai!’

Baba Mugabe spent the whole afternoon with us and as time went on we could see how he bewitched Morgan Tsvangirai during their weekly ‘china cup’ tea parties and got Tendai Biti rhapsodising about his wisdom, Nelson Chamisa about his leadership abilities, Dave Coltart about his deep compassion and British Ambassador Deborah Bronnert about his charm. Ad nauseum.

Baba Mugabe gave Vigil supporters an authentic taste of the Zimbabwean voting experience. Here are some of the comments while people queued to vote:

‘The ballot box is getting full but the line is not moving.’

‘I slept here last night and can’t get to the front of the queue but other people have vote twice or thrice.’

'I will use my dead father's vote.'

'They say it's one man, one vote but why has it changed to one man, one million votes?'

We were joined at the Vigil by MDC members supporting the 19<sup>th</sup> monthly diaspora protest.

After the Vigil we gathered at the India Club for our bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum. Ephraim Tapa, a Vigil founder member and President of Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR), talked about the rigging of the elections. He said that Tsvangirai had taken poisonous issues to SADC many times and had always been told to go back and resolve them with the parties in the GNU. Ephraim said nothing could be expected from SADC, which was just a trade union of presidents.

Ephraim said that the Vigil / ROHR had had a meeting with the Zimbabwe desk of the British Foreign Office and we had given them our analysis of the situation at home. We had been invited to another meeting once the election results are known. Ephraim said our delegation was dismayed that concern seems to have shifted from 'free and fair elections' to 'credible elections'.

We recall how SADC approved the rigged elections in the DRC in December 2011. In the words of journalist Simon Allison: ‘A range of international observers were watching, and uncovered a long list of offences: evidence of vote tampering; impossibly high rates of voter turnout in places known to be loyal to the president; strangely low turnouts in opposition areas; the mysterious disappearance of 2 000 polling station results in Kinshasa; and violence in the run-up to and during the campaign which killed 18 people, mostly committed by incumbent Joseph Kabila’s presidential guard.

‘And yet, SADC, along with the African Union and three other African observer missions, declared that the elections were “successful”, duly confirming that the organisation’s standards of fairness and transparency are very low indeed; and sending a message to other leaders, like Mugabe, that there is a fair amount of electoral mischief that they can get away with before the regional body will call them out on it. And if Mugabe is called out, he is well within his rights to point out SADC’s hypocrisy — and ignore their verdict. Once again, somehow, Mugabe holds all the cards. There is a reason why he has lasted in power so long — and why he still got a little while to go’ (see: Mugabe still holds all the poll cards – [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jul20a\\_2013.html#Z22](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jul20a_2013.html#Z22) ).

Our hopes were not raised by a statement from the African Union: ‘The environment in Zimbabwe so far reassures us that the conditions are good for the election to be held on July 31,’ said Aisha Abdullahi, AU commissioner for political affairs (see: [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jul20\\_2013.html#Z16](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jul20_2013.html#Z16)

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Fair Zimbabwe elections possible: AU).

Our ZAF meeting discussed plans for a demonstration on election day, Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> July, at which we are to be joined by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC). It was agreed that we would meet at 12 noon outside the Zimbabwe Embassy and at 2pm would go on to South Africa House with a letter objecting to any moves to form another government of national unity dominated by Zanu PF.

## **Other points**

- Thanks once again to Fungayi Mabhunu for playing Baba Mugabe in our sweaty old Mugabe mask.
- Martin Chinyanga brought flowers to lay on the doorstep of the Embassy in mourning for the death of ROHR activist Elliot Dhlwayo murdered by the regime.
- ROHR has received a letter from the Home Office asking them to outline the reasons Zimbabweans should not be sent home. A reply will be sent after the elections. if they go as expected we will warn the Home Office to prepare for a new wave of asylum seekers.
- Thanks to Tino Mashonganyika for his heartfelt prayer for Zimbabwe as this crucial time.

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 RECORD: 64 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR North East Region Zimbabwe Day Fundraising Event.** Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July from 1 – 8 pm. Venue: Benton Community Centre, 17 Edenbridge Crescent, Benton, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE12 8EP. Food, drink & entertainment. Contact Givemore Chitengu 07912747744, Kennedy Makonese 07979914429, Tapiwa Semwayo 07412236229, Collet Dube 07951516566.
- **Demonstration for Democracy.** Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> July. The Vigil is to join Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) and the TUC in a protest outside the Zimbabwe Embassy on election day. Meet at 12 noon. Move to the South African High Commission at 2 pm. The protest will end at 6 pm.
- **ROHR Executive meeting.** Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August from 12 – 3 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA.
- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August from 6.30 – 9.30 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. The Strand is the same road as the Vigil. From the Vigil it's about a 10 minute walk, in the direction away from Trafalgar Square. The Strand Continental is situated on the south side of the Strand between Somerset House and the turn off onto Waterloo Bridge. The entrance is marked by a big sign high above and a sign for its famous Indian restaurant at street level. It's next to a newsagent. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.
- **Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting.** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August from 12 – 3 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA.
- **Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2012** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/467-vigil-highlights-2012>  
. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2012 Highlights page.

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization 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. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents the views and opinions of ROHR.

- **Facebook pages:**

- Vigil: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8157345519&ref=ts>

- ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>

- ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights/301811392835>

- **Vigil Myspace page:** <http://www.myspace.com/zimbabwевigil>.

- **Useful websites:** [www.zanupfcrime.com](http://www.zanupfcrime.com) which reports on Zanu PF abuses and [www.ipaidabribe.org.zw](http://www.ipaidabribe.org.zw) where people can report corruption in Zimbabwe