

Mugabe finished – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 18th January 2014

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Sunday, 19 January 2014 15:52 -

When the Spanish dictator Franco died in 1975 the authorities in Madrid were less than frank about his condition. It was some time before his demise was announced and by then he had enough preservative pumped into his body to keep it stiff until the second coming.

More locally, the Vigil recalls that when President Mutharika of Malawi died a couple of years ago, his corpse – resuscitation tubes attached – was flown to South Africa for supposed 'life-saving treatment' while his supporters frantically tried to fix the succession.

Are we seeing a similar charade being played out in Harare? The Vigil doesn't know whether Mugabe is dead or incapacitated. But it's obvious that he's finished.

The 89 year old, looking 'frail and tired', flew off after Christmas ostensibly on a month-long holiday, but really to consult his doctor in Singapore. His prostate cancer had spread and he had already lived years longer than the doctor predicted.

The Zanu PF source Baba Jukwa then reported that Mugabe had collapsed. The state media said he had cut short his holiday and flown home but that he was 'as fit as a fiddle'. Some fiddle!

A photograph showed him being greeted by Vice-President Mujuru at the airport. But people immediately noticed that the picture was identical to one taken a year ago when Mugabe flew

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back from a trip to Addis Ababa.

The real scandal is that Zanu PF put a sick old man up for election when he had nothing to offer Zimbabwe. His work is done: he has bankrupted Zimbabwe, turning it from one of the most prosperous countries in Africa to one of the world's poorest. It's time now for 'Heroes' Acre.

Other points

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A meeting of the bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum held after the Vigil discussed plans to stage a demonstration in Brussels next month when the EU decides whether to renew the targeted sanctions against Mugabe. It was agreed to run a petition to the EU demanding that there should be no recognition of the illegitimate Mugabe regime. Disappointment was expressed at the failure of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights to respond to our request for advice on a legal challenge to the stolen elections. We were pleased to be joined by Eldridge Culverwell, an activist from the Vigil's early days who is now working with Zimbabweans United for Democracy (ZUNDE). See 'Events and Notices' for their website. Among others who attended were Wilbert Mukori who came down from Manchester. It was good to welcome back political commentator Dr Clifford Mashiri.

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We are glad SW Radio Africa has put a link to our website on their website's front page.

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Vigil supporter, Joseph Chivayo who comes down from Derby on the 5 O'clock bus to be with us, features in the Derby Telegraph about his work for the community (see: <http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/asylum-seeker-helping-people-streets-Derby/story-20371296-detail/story.html>)

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he asylum seeker who is helping people on the streets of Derby in his local newspaper).

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Thanks to Bridget Zhakata, Patricia Masamba (who climbed up and down to put up the high banners) and Helen Rukambiro who arrived early to set up the Vigil.

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See below for the third quarter summary of the 2013 Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights (July – September).

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2013: July – September

Saturday 6th July: Someone defined stupidity as doing the same thing again and expecting a different result. The reverse could also be true: intelligence could be defined as doing the same thing and expecting the same result. On this basis the MDCs are stupid and Zanu PF intelligent. Since it's now obvious that the elections have already been thoroughly rigged and that none of the long-promised reforms will be implemented, the Vigil could challenge Tsvangirai and Ncube to honour their threats to boycott the elections. But it is clear there is no chance they will do this.

Friday 12th July: A petition calling for free and fair elections was presented to the Zimbabwe Electoral Offices and the Home Affairs Ministry in Harare by a large group of activists from the Vigil's sister organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR).

Saturday 13th July: The Vigil sent a letter to President Zuma in the hope of putting some spine into SADC: '*President Mugabe has made it clear that he will not respect the requirements of the recent SADC meeting in Maputo and has continued to obstruct any attempt to implement the reforms he undertook to make under the Global Political*

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Agreement. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that the elections on 31st

July are already being systematically rigged.'

Thursday 18th July: The Vigil / ROHR had a meeting with the Zimbabwe desk of the British Foreign Office and we gave them our analysis of the situation at home. Vigil founder member and President of ROHR Ephraim Tapa said our delegation was dismayed that concern seems to have shifted from 'free and fair elections' to 'credible elections'.

Saturday 20th July: While SADC met in Maputo, a demanding Mugabe (played by Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) kept all of us at the Vigil hard at it stuffing ballot boxes for the elections on 31st 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. After the Vigil we gathered at the India Club for our bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum.

Ephraim talked about the rigging of the elections and said nothing could be expected from SADC, which was just a trade union of presidents.

Saturday 27th July: With only four days to go before the elections, the Vigil 'commends' President Mugabe on his 'credible' re-election for another 5 year term. Despite overwhelming evidence that the elections on 31st July are being rigged, the SADC Summit on 20th July had four 'commendations' and a 'credible' in its brief four-point communique released after meeting to consider complaints by the MDC about the election arrangements. President Mugabe (again in the form of Fungayi in our Mugabe mask) was again at the Vigil to stuff ballot boxes. He had with him two large black bags marked 'Nikuv', the Israeli company being paid millions to help the Zanu PF vote riggers.

Wednesday 31st July: As votes were cast at home, the Vigil staged a six hour demonstration in protest at the rigging of the vote. About 70 Vigil supporters were joined by members of Action for Southern Africa, the successor to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and representatives of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party. The protest was covered by a variety of news organisations who showed particular interest in the Vigil's depiction of how Mugabe was stealing the elections. Fungayi (in our Mugabe mask) was filmed stuffing ballot boxes with votes from large black bags labeled Nikuv. During the afternoon Vigil supporters moved en masse around the corner for a boisterous demonstration outside the South African High Commission, where the following letter was delivered: *'Dear President Zuma: Zimbab*

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wean exiles and supporters deplore the refusal of President Mugabe to ensure the elections are free and fair. There is overwhelming evidence that the poll has been comprehensively rigged and we have no confidence that the results will reflect the will of the people. The Zimbabwe Vigil calls on the Southern African Development Community to organise new elections in keeping with the agreed roadmap and SADC election guidelines.

Saturday 3rd August: After the predictable failure of the MDC in the elections, Morgan Tsvangirai must consider his position. The custom in most countries is that a losing candidate stands aside – particularly if he has lost several elections. The Vigil believes that Tsvangirai must take responsibility for a succession of decisions which have been fatal to the opposition in Zimbabwe.

Here are a few of the MDC decisions which have puzzled us, as we have clearly recorded in our diaries: 1) The mad split over the Senate, 2) Pulling out of the Presidential run-off in 2008, 3) Joining in the flawed GNU, 4) Failure to pull out of government when Mugabe immediately disregarded the GPA, 5) Being distracted by the ludicrous 4-year-long constitution-making exercise, which produced an abortion of a document when the MDC should have spent the time concentrating on getting a level playing field

for elections, 6) Allowing vital roadmap issues to be delayed until they were impossible to implement, 7) Agreeing to take part in the latest elections when none of the MDC or SADC requirements had been met.

Saturday 10th August: There has been a call in London for a conference of the Zimbabwean diaspora to discuss the way forward following the rigged elections. The call came from Ephraim Tapa who said the MDC project had run its course and Zimbabweans were looking to the diaspora to come up with an alternative programme to save Zimbabwe. The Vigil was attended by 100 Zimbabweans from all parts of the UK, including members of the MDC.

Saturday 17th August: Supporters of the Vigil and associated groups have agreed to arrange an all-stakeholder meeting in London in October to give the diaspora an opportunity to discuss ways of working together to restore Zimbabwe. The decision was made at the Zimbabwe Action Forum held after the Vigil. The Forum was addressed by Dewa Mavhinga, Senior Researcher for Africa with Human Rights Watch and a former regional co-ordinator for Southern Africa of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. He was in Zimbabwe for the elections and gave us a firsthand account of how they were rigged. Mr Mavhinga, who has had meetings with the leadership of most SADC countries, said they had made it clear that, as long as the violence of 2008 was avoided, they would rubberstamp the election outcome.

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Saturday 24th August: The Vigil launched our new petition calling on the UK and the European Union to follow the lead of the United States and continue sanctions. The petition reads:

‘Following the rigged elections in Zimbabwe, we urge the European Union to re-impose the targeted sanctions on Mugabe and his cronies. We further call on the EU to suspend government aid to all Southern African Development Community countries until they abide by their commitment to uphold human rights in Zimbabwe.’

Ephraim Tapa said: ‘

Altogether the EU gives billions of dollars each year to pay for the misgovernment and corruption of Southern Africa. Why? Let them look East for aid.’

A South Korean film crew spent the afternoon interviewing several of us about the situation in Zimbabwe.

Saturday 31st August: The Zimbabwean diaspora is puzzled that a month has passed since the stolen elections and a seemingly punch-drunk opposition has given no sign of a strategy to confront Mugabe, let alone stage demonstrations against Zanu PF’s blatant chicanery. We at the Vigil are sorry that the MDC did not decide to boycott parliament to make a powerful statement to the world about the election rigging – especially necessary since the puzzling withdrawal of the MDC’s legal challenge against the outcome. Mugabe promised that civil servants and others would be given pay rises. We urge the MDC to support the legitimate demands of workers for this promise to be honoured.

Saturday 7th September: After the Vigil many supporters went on to our Zimbabwe Action Forum at which we discussed plans for an all-stakeholders’ meeting of the diaspora to be held in London. It was proposed that the diaspora should be invited to coalesce around ideas such as: 1) Scrapping indigenisation and encouraging foreign direct investment, 2) Giving freehold title to farmers to enable them to get bank loans or sell their properties, 3) Restructuring the diamond mines, 4) Privatising the parastatals, 5) Requiring senior elected and non-elected leaders to disclose their assets, 6) Replacing the judiciary and reforming the police and armed forces.

Saturday 14th September: A pompom from the Vigil for NoViolet Bulawayo who has been chosen as one of the finalists for the prestigious Man Booker prize for best novel of the year written by someone from the Commonwealth (still including Zimbabwe!) NoViolet, whose book is titled ‘We Need New Names’, gave an interview to the UK’s Guardian newspaper about a visit home in April – the first time she had been back for thirteen years. It is clear that she shares our fears as we face the consequences of another stolen election. ‘It was a strange country,’ Bulawayo told the Guardian. ‘I went there in search of the Zimbabwe I knew and it was a shock: power cuts, water cuts, just driving down the streets the potholes were amazing, and 80% of the population not working. Just seeing the desperation, wherever you

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went, people were struggling. That was a picture of the country that I never knew.' For all Zanu PF's big talk, a bleak picture is painted in the latest economic report on Zimbabwe by the World Bank.

Saturday 21st September: While we sang 'Ishe Komberera Africa / Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica' outside the Embassy at the end of the Vigil, Zanu-PF supporters in the UK were attending 'official victory Celebrations' elsewhere in London. Zanu-PF supporters continue to claim asylum in the UK on the fraudulent basis of political persecution in Zimbabwe. The Vigil will continue to expose those who do this. We believe they should be sent home to pressure NoPresident Mugabe to clear up the mess there which has made it unpleasant for even Zanu-PF people to live in.

Saturday 28th September: The Vigil was glad to hear from Kate Hoey MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe, that she is planning to attend our conference on the future of Zimbabwe to be held on 24th October. Kate welcomed this initiative, agreeing there was general despair at the situation following the stolen elections. We are now sending out invitations to people and groups who we think might be interested in sharing their views on how Zimbabweans can work through this despair to a better future.

See next week's diary for the final part of the 2013 Vigil Highlights.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

FOR THE RECORD: 41 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 1st February 2014 from 6.15 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.

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Next Swaziland Vigil. Saturday 25th January from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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ROHR Birmingham branch general meeting. Saturday 25th January from 1:30 – 5 pm.
Venue: Malika House, 81 George Street, Lozells, Birmingham B19 1NS. Contact: Thandiwe Gwarumba 07503512308,
Janemary Mapfumo 07412310429, Tino Mashonganyika 07463272078 and Tecla Bandawe 07450507650.

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 15th February from 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see ZAF entry above.

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‘The Rain that Washes’ national tour: Fri 28 Feb – The Cut, New Cut, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 8BY; Fri 4 Apr – Seven Arts, 31A Harrogate Road, Leeds LS7 3PD; Sat 5 Apr – Selby Town Hall, York Street, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 4AJ; Sat 24, Sun 25 & Mon 26 May – Brighton Fringe Festival, Malborough Theatre, Princes Street, Brighton BN2 1RD. 4
Booking details can be found at www.chickenshed.org.uk/whatson

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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.

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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.

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Facebook pages:

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

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

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

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Zimbabweans United for Democracy (ZUNDE). For more information about this organisation, check: www.zunde.org .