

Written by Administrator  
Sunday, 23 February 2014 16:18 -

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The EU's fawning climbdown over sanctions has predictably been scorned by Zanu PF who will now harp on about the 'victimisation' of Mugabe and his wife. As the EU has now given the green light to Mugabe's security thugs, murderers and looters, it would have been sensible to suspend all the sanctions. But there is nothing sensible about the EU's abject decision.

Baroness Ashton, the EU's foreign policy chief, justifies the move by saying there has been progress in Zimbabwe (see: [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit\\_12474/](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_12474/) - EU Declaration on the review of EU-Zimbabwe relations 19 February 2014).

We at the Vigil haven't seen any progress at all. If anything, things have got worse.

As the opposition MP Eddie Cross says, the situation in Zimbabwe has deteriorated sharply on many fronts: economic, political, diplomatic and in general governance. Baroness Ashton talks in her statement about hopes for 'further' improvement in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans. This suggests there has been some improvement that Mr Cross for one has not seen. He says 'The great majority are living in absolute poverty and despair' and notes: 'I have never seen confidence levels so low. People have no faith in their political leaders, no faith in our institutions and no faith in the police or any other of our service agencies.' (See: <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/analysis/70575/we-have-lost-the-way.html> – We have lost the way).

Here's a letter we are sending to Baroness Ashton:

*Dear Baroness Ashton,*

*We have read your statement on EU-Zimbabwe relations and are surprised at your comment that there has been progress in Zimbabwe. We Zimbabweans forced into exile closely follow events at home and have seen no progress whatsoever.*

*President Ian Khama of Botswana supports our view that the July elections were rigged by Mugabe. The new constitution is not being observed, as the recent beating up of peaceful demonstrators confirms. There has been no improvement in the economy and instead we have official admission of widespread corruption.*

*We ask you: What is the good news from Zimbabwe that the EU uses to justify the suspension of targeted measures against the Mugabe regime?*

The letter to Baroness Ashton is not the only letter the Vigil has written this week. As mentioned in last week's diary, the Vigil has again been libeled by the UK Border Agency. We have sent the following letter to the Home Secretary Theresa May.

*'One of our supporters, Joseph Chivayo, has received a document from the Home Office about his asylum case which includes the following paragraph: 'Regard is given to the letter from Rose Benton dated 14/09/2013, the Zimbabwe Vigil Co-ordinator stating that you have been particularly helpful in coming on time to help set up the vigil. Objective evidence 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 ( [www.nehandaradio.com/2009/06/30/rohr-zimvigil-exploiting-asylum-seekers](http://www.nehandaradio.com/2009/06/30/rohr-zimvigil-exploiting-asylum-seekers) ). Therefore no weight is attached to the production of this letter.'*

*'Here is his email of complaint to us: 'Please find attached part of the document I received from the Home Office. As I mentioned before their claims are seriously flawed and the fact that they use a report from a online tiny publication to discredit Zim Vigil is quite shocking and shows true lack of understanding of what we do and how we carry out peaceful protest at Zimbabwe House. Do they even know who funded that particular article in 2009 and what their motive was? While a letter to counter some of those claims mentioned here will be good, I think overally we need to ensure they understand how we operate and the level of responsibility, dedication and transparency that we operate as. They seem to overlook the simple fact that Zimbabwe House is manned and operated by CIO operatives and they surely monitor and report back on our activism activities. The Vigil itself was formed on a non-violent standing and to date we show our disgust to ZANU PF and their inner cronies through our consistent peaceful protest every weekend for more than 10 years now, so for the Home Office to suggest my activities at the Zim Vigil are very low level activism shows lack of understanding on how we operate and dedication shown by Vigil supporters who regardless of the fact that most live on the breadline sacrifice week in and out to attend and have their say while we pray and hope the world is watching and listening. Please take a look at it and see how you can help.'*

*'Enclosed is a scan of the relevant page about the Vigil in the information provided to Joseph by the Home Office.'*

*'The Vigil would like to point out that three years ago the UK Border Agency apologised for this libel of the Vigil and assured us that this allegation would be disregarded (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/323-text-of-letter-from-ukba-to-the-zimbabwe-vigil>).*

*'We object most strongly to the repetition of this libel and ask for a new undertaking that the UKBA staff will stop their cut-and-paste approach to asylum cases involving Zimbabwe Vigil supporters. We draw your attention to the following commentary in the Vigil's diary (see Vigil diaries: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/315-home-office-a-disgrace-objective-evidence-zimbabwe-vigil-diary-25th-june-2011> and <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/324-uk-border-agency-says-sorry-to-vigil-zimbabwe-vigil-diary-23rd-july-2011>).*

*'We are alarmed that Vigil activists are not being given a fair hearing. Of special concern are Deborah Harry whose date for deportation was today and who we are informed has just been removed from Yarlswood today and Try Mahachi currently at Dover Detention Centre who has been given a removal date of Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February.*

*'As Joseph explains in his email to us, no person associated with the Vigil could be confident of a welcome back in Zimbabwe.'*

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The Vigil is particularly irritated because all our letters to the Home Office about asylum seekers carry the following:

‘IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER: It has come to our attention that some asylum tribunal judges and UKBA officials have misconceptions about the Vigil. Misinformation from Zimbabwe media sites has been used by UKBA officials to discredit the authenticity of Vigil letters – please check: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/323-text-of-letter-from-ukba-to-the-zimbabwe-vigil>

for text of letter from UKBA confirming this information should not used in this way. The Vigil does not issue membership cards. Our supporters sign a register weekly and we log this information on our attendance database.

Our flickr photo website is password protected and photos can only be uploaded by Vigil personnel.’

## **Other points**

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The Vigil marked Mugabe’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with a little tableau consisting of Fungayi Mabhunu wearing our Mugabe mask sleeping in a chair while his limbs were manipulated by strings. Unfortunately we couldn’t capture the ‘slurring and rambling’ that the London Times detected in Mugabe’s television interview.

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Fungayi reported that – contrary to Baroness Ashton’s optimistic picture – his family in Zimbabwe say people are so desperate that violence could erupt.

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## Tell us the good news – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 22nd February 2014

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This, of course, would be denied by Zanu PF's white groupies whose support for Mugabe has shocked the astute observer Cathy Buckle (see: <http://www.cathybuckle.com/index.php?id=154> – Utterly shameful).

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We are pleased to say that our supporter Deborah Harry, who was due to be deported on Friday, is still in the UK.

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Thanks to Michelle Dube for climbing on the table to put up the high banners and to Helen Rukambiro and Caroline Witts for looking after the front table. Caroline, from Devon, brought with her a copy of Cathy Buckle's new book of her letters: 'Can you hear the Drums' which is available from her website: [www.cathybuckle.com](http://www.cathybuckle.com) .

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

**FOR THE RECORD:** 37 signed the register.

**EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

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

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**Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see ZAF entry above. 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 sign at street level. It’s between a newsagent and Pizza Express. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

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**Next Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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**Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting.** Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March from 12 noon. Venue: to be advised.

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**ROHR Reading branch general meeting.** Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: RISC 35-39 London St

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Reading,  
Berkshire RG1 4PS

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For further enquiries contact:  
Nicodimus Muganhu (Chairman)  
07877386792

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Charles D Ndlovu (Organising Secretary) 07413879590

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Mary Eluwasi (Vice Organising Secretary) 07888310582

**Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2013** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/560-vigil-highlights-2013>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2013 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.

**Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement** holds monthly meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.

**Facebook pages:**

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

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](http://www.zunde.org) .