

Written by Administrator
Saturday, 18 October 2014 21:40 -

The British government has expressed concern at the lack of progress in reforming the electoral process in Zimbabwe. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in its latest update on Zimbabwe published on 16th October, says the newly passed Electoral Amendment Act still contradicts the new constitution, with no sign of further amendments being planned.

It observed: 'This does not bode well for meaningful constitutional reforms around the electoral process in Zimbabwe, especially concerning voter registration or access to the voters' roll.'
(See: Zimbabwe – Country of Concern: latest update, 30 September 2014 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/zimbabwe-country-of-concern/zimbabwe-country-of-concern-latest-update-30-september-2014>).

The Foreign Office's comments come as the European Union is apparently preparing to make further concessions to Mugabe next month, despite Zanu PF's failure to allow free and fair elections and respect the rule of law. The Vigil points to the refusal of the Zimbabwean authorities to release the voters' roll as constitutionally required. Apparently the Electoral Commission's computer is still out of order more than a year after the disputed elections!

We believe that if, as appears likely, the EU resumes direct financial support for the Mugabe regime some of this aid money should be devoted to ensuring that the electoral roll is made available in digital form so that it can be subjected to objective scrutiny.

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Sources in Zimbabwe tell the Vigil that this would be ‘the smoking gun’ exposing the illegitimacy of last year’s elections and lay the groundwork for a new voters’ roll. One of our informants says money given by Western donors to NGO workers to produce a computerised copy of the voters’ roll has been wasted. He says ‘they have done an atrocious job’.

‘My quest is somehow to convince the donors that the roll audit will be the catalyst for change’, he writes, adding that the money needed to complete the job properly was a comparatively small amount compared to the benefits.

‘A key issue in any discussions between the EU and the Zimbabwe government must be the legitimacy of the Zimbabwe government following the serious allegations about rigging in the 2013 elections. A comprehensive audit of the elections, including that of the 2013 voters’ roll, should be a major issue in any negotiations, given that the Cotonou Agreement, which is the basis for the dispute between the EU and the Zimbabwe government, insists on good governance, human rights and the rule of law.’

Our source continued: ‘Does the EU not consider that the 2013 elections were equally as flawed as the previous four elections, and that this should be clarified by a full investigation before any substantive re-engagement with Zimbabwe takes place?’

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The Vigil's view of the situation in Zimbabwe is apparently far too negative according to a columnist of the London Times, Matthew Parris. A former British Conservative MP who was brought up in Zimbabwe, he has had another happy holiday there and says 'Zimbabwe is a safe and ordered place with a stable economy: one of Africa's more advanced countries and probably the continent's best-educated. I blush as a journalist to suggest that the reason we think it's in chaos is that we British have read so much about Zimbabwe in our newspapers . . .'

Well, we at the Vigil wonder which British newspapers he's been reading because Zimbabwe hardly ever gets a mention as far as we can see. For his flatulent waffling (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/620-you-can-take-the-boy-out-of-africa---> on our Campaigns page).

As far as the economy being stable, perhaps Mr Parris should read the latest article by Eddie Cross MP in which he says 'my own prediction for the current year is for a decline in GDP of not less than 5% . . .The financial stress on everyone is palpable. (See <http://www.eddiecross.africanherd.com/> – Graceland). Or Mr Parris could look at Cathy Buckle's latest piece: 'Every month more and more people lose their jobs as companies close and the economy contracts (see: <http://www.cathybuckle.com/index.php?id=170> Of raindrops and weevils and poisonous pesticide –). But Cross and Buckle are no doubt partial because they live in Zimbabwe, unlike Parris who seems to have gone on a Tourist Board freebie.

As for Zimbabwe being 'one of Africa's more advanced countries', the patronising Mr Parris might take a look at a video of one of Dr Grace's rallies at which she claims to 'speak in tongues'. She is now not only mother of the nation but an intellectual and a prophet and pastor (see: <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10152897194633083>). For the views of Vigil supporter Dr Clifford Mashiri on Dr Grace's dangerous campaign (see:

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<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/619-grace-mugabes-hate-filled-witch-hunting-is-worse-than-ebola>
on our Campaigns page).

Other points

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Last week the diary reported on a meeting in London addressed by Senator David Coltart on behalf of a Zimbabwean charity providing scholarships for needy and promising school children. He took issue with what we said and you can read our exchange of emails on our campaigns page (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/621-complaint-about-zimbabwe-vigil-diary-of-11th-october-2014>). We are sorry if we expressed ourselves clumsily last week.

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Thanks to Helen Rukambiro, Mavis Chisvo, Thobile Gwebu, Collen Mupazviruho and Eunice Mucherechedzo for arriving early to help set up. Thanks also to the Swaziland Vigil for providing delicious sadza, stew, cakes and puddings to fundraise for their cause. There was so much food that they were able to feed some of the homeless people who gather in the area.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 25 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 25th October at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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ROHR Middlesbrough General Meeting. Saturday 25th October from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: Refugee Centre, 49 Grange Road, Middlesbrough TS1 5AU. For more information please contact: Angelina Huni (Chair) 07871367239, Ndumiso Ncube (Organizing Secretary) 07532080247, Xoliso Sithole (Treasurer) 07476558655, Levinia Ncube (Vice Organising Secretary) 07404772407, Helen Sibanda (Secretary) 07799574994.

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 1st November from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. 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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ROHR Executive Committee meeting. Saturday 1st November from 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA.

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

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'Hope for Zimbabwe'. Tuesday 4th November from 7 – 9 pm. Venue: the Royal Geographical Society, London. Hosted by the Mike Campbell Foundation with Ben Freeth, MBE, Christina

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Lamb, OBE, Dame Linda Dobbs (Chair). Tickets: £15. For more information, check:

<http://www.mikecampbellfoundation.com/page/events-2014>

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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.

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

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The Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF) meets twice a month after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy

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Facebook pages:

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>

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

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SW Radio Africa's website and sound archive is being hosted on www.archive.org . Go to their site and type in swradioafrica which will link you to snapshots of their site over the years and at the top of that page a link to their website where, under podcasts, you will find the audio.