

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/30015865346/sizes/m/>

On Friday Botswana celebrated 50 years of independence. There has been a transformation. In 1966 it was the poor relation in the region. Some of us at the Vigil recall travelling through Botswana by train about this time, making lengthy unexplained stops in the middle of nowhere, only for someone to suddenly emerge from the semi-desert with a tortoise for sale.

Today the tables have been turned. It's poor Zimbabweans who emerge everywhere to sell handicrafts, wild fruit and vegetables, simcards, second hand clothes . . . soon to be joined by US dollars when the threatened bond notes appear.

Far from being the backward relatives the Botswana now have a much higher standard of living than Zimbabweans though their country has far fewer resources. The Gross Domestic Product per head of population – a standard measure of wealth – was \$953 for Zimbabweans in 2013. The figure for Botswana was \$7,315. (The figures for 2016 will no doubt be even worse for Zimbabweans.)

Why has this happened? Mugabe blames it on sanctions but the Vigil believes the simple answer is Mugabe and his rapacious elite. Robert Guest of *The Economist* wrote in his 2004 book, *The Shackled Continent*, 'In the last 35 years, Botswana's economy has grown faster than any other in the world. Yet cabinet ministers have not awarded themselves mansions and helicopters — and even the president has been seen doing his own shopping.' Commenting on this, Marian L Tupy noted in *The American*: 'Similarly, a game warden I spoke to in the Chobe National Park reminisced about standing behind the minister of education in the line for groceries. A shop manager recognized the minister and motioned her to the front of the line. She flatly refused.' A far cry from Zimbabwe.

Botswana was described today as 'an island of peace, tranquillity and wisdom' by the writer Alexander McCall Smith in a BBC radio interview. McCall Smith has made Botswana famous abroad with wry tales of Precious Ramotswe and her No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. If only he would turn his attention to Zimbabwe, where he was born. How about this plot for a farce: a High Court judge who overturns an illegal police ban on demonstrations is accused by the Chief

Justice of having taken a bribe, police hover in the background as Zanu PF youth provoke violence in Harare to be blamed on demonstrators, a student leader is arrested for holding a poster asking for jobs at a graduation ceremony, people are threatened with jail for displaying the Zimbabwean flag, people abducted, tortured . . .

Too far-fetched? Not in Zimbabwe. The Mugabe regime is what the Japanese observer Ken Yamamoto would describe as a fence post tortoise: 'When you're driving down a country road and you come across a fence post with a tortoise balanced on top, that's a fence post tortoise. You know he didn't get up there by himself, he doesn't belong up there, he doesn't know what to do while he's up there, he's elevated beyond his ability to function, and you just wonder what kind of dumb arse put him up there to begin with.'

### Other points

- Thanks to Guy Benton who took photographs of the Vigil. One of them showing the fading grandeur of the Embassy partly obscured by an ambulance symbolised the state of Zimbabwe. The other photos will be available shortly.
- We were glad that ROHR activist Linda Masarira has been released at last after being incarcerated for nearly three months on trumped up charges. The Vigil and ROHR staged several protests demanding her release.
- We are relieved that another of our activists, Tino Mashonganikya (Information and Publicity Officer for ROHR), who was taken to the airport to be deported, did not go. It is reported that the pilot had to slam the doors shut while the Home Office enforcers were still on the stairs trying to push him in.
- The Vigil will mark its 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October. Sadly 14 years of protest against human rights abuses and lack of democracy is not a cause for celebration.
- Thanks to those who came early to help set up: Rashiwe Bayisayi, Benjamin Chigamba, Abel Chikanya, Joseph Chivayo, Percy Dube, Flemming Diza, Kevin Gondo, Hellena Gusinyu, Isabell Gwatidzo, Etines Kapiya, Jonathan Kariwo, Vimbai Karumbidza, Phillip Mahlahla, Nancy Makurira, Rosemary Maponga, Cephas Maswoswa, Gladys Meck, Sharon Moyo, Esther Munyira, Tracy Mupeti, Simbarashe Mutero, Sally Mutseyami, Elizabeth Ndebele, Elizabeth Ndewere, Mduduzi Ndlovu, Mary Ngoro, Casper Nyamakura, Sharon Nziramasanga, Chipso Parirenyatwa, Eva Sanyahokwe, Sihle Sibanda, Mary Taruvinga, Douglas Tavengwa, Maureen Tavengwa, Fadzai Tembo, Emmaculate Tshuma and Elector Zvorwadza. Thanks to Isabell, Sharon M and Elector for looking after the front table, to Etines for logging the names on the register of those who came early, to Chipso P and Simbarashe for selling 'Mugabe must go / has gone' wristbands, to Maureen for handing out flyers and to Phillip. Cephas, Casper, Jonathan, Kevin, Joseph Mduduzi, Flemming, Benjamin, Honest and Gladys for putting up the banners. Special thanks to Phillip, Kevin and Chipso P for hastily putting up the tarpaulin when it started to rain and for taking it down at the end.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website. For videos of Vigils and other events, check the ROHR facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/www.rohrzimbabwe.org/videos?fref=photo>

**FOR THE RECORD:** 63 signed the register.

## EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Joice Mujuru: Zimbabwe's Changing Opposition.** Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October from 4.30 – 5.30 pm. Venue: Chatham House, 10 St James Square, London SW1Y 4LE. To register to attend the event visit:

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/zimbabwe-s-changing-opposition>

or you may prefer to join the MDC and other Zimbabwean groups who will be protesting outside from 3 – 6 pm.

- **ROHR National Executive meeting.** Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October from 12 noon. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see below.

- **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 us.

- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October 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 a shop. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF)** meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.

- **Monthly Itai Dzamara protest** Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October. From 2 – 6 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. The protest is to mark nineteen months since Dzamara's abduction by intelligence agents.

- **Zimbabwe Vigil's 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.** On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October we will mark the Vigil's 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

- **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High

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Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

- **Evan Mawarire: The Significance of Social Media for Public Protest in Zimbabwe.**

Wednesday 19

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October from 5 - 6 pm. Venue: Chatham House, 10 St James Square, London SW1Y 4LE. To register to attend the event visit:

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/significance-social-media-public-protest-zimbabwe>

- **Mike Campbell Foundation Fifth anniversary: Taking Effective Steps to Fight Dictatorship – Restoring Justice, Restoring People.** □ Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October at 6.30 pm. Venue: the Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR. For tickets:

<https://event.bo>

[okitbee.com/8186/mike-campbell-foundation-5-year-anniversary-event](http://okitbee.com/8186/mike-campbell-foundation-5-year-anniversary-event)

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

- **Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2015** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/746-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2015>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2015 Highlights page.

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

ROHR:

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

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