

A leading British parliamentarian has said it is disgraceful that prominent Zimbabwean civil rights campaigners are being refused visas to visit the UK to talk about the struggle against Mugabe and his Zanu PF regime.

Kate Hoey, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe, was speaking at the Royal Geographical Society in London on Wednesday at a meeting of the Mike Campbell Foundation which was set up to address injustices involved in Mugabe's land seizures.

She said a visa had been denied to one of the speakers invited to the gathering, Gift Konjana, who had been detained more than thirty times and his home petrol-bombed for helping destitute farm workers.

Other activists refused visas include Pastor Evan Mawarire, leader of the #thisflag protest, now exiled in the United States, who had been invited to address the parliamentary group as well as to speak at the London foreign policy think tank, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). Another excluded activist was Patson Dzamara, brother of the abducted Itai, who was also due to speak to the parliamentary group.

Ms Hoey said the British government was letting in representatives of the Mugabe regime, including people who had been involved in killings, as well as other tainted people such as Joice Mujuru, but was more and more turning away seasoned campaigners for change.

Kate said the British Ambassador to Harare Catriona Laing was angry at the refusal of visas and had taken the matter up with the relevant government department. The problem appeared to involve financial guarantees regarding their stay in the UK. Kate suggested people write to their MPs to increase awareness in Parliament of what was happening.

A speaker from Zimbabwe who was able to get a visa was Bishop Ancelimo Magaya, founder of Grace Ablaze Ministries International, making his first visit to the UK. The Bishop, who is blind, received a standing ovation for his speech in which he said the people of Zimbabwe were 'wounded and despondent'. He spoke of abductions and a tired dictatorial leadership holding on to power by brutality. Mugabe had mastered the art of giving the impression that he allowed

democratic elections but they were all rigged and people intimidated. 'Diplomats don't see this', he added.

Bishop Magaya said the Church must lead the way in dislodging the dictatorship. He said 'the CIO put on dark glasses. Well I don't see them. I am blind so I am not afraid. If I die I die. That is the motivation the Church should have. We must not be silent in the face of oppression, torture, politically-motivated violence. We must declare God's judgement. Under God we will win through.'

Other points

- In answer to a question from one of the 28 Vigil supporters at the meeting, the Bishop said people in the diaspora were automatically regarded by the regime as sell-outs and were liable to be treated as such when they returned home. Anyway, there was nothing for them if they did go back.

- Another speaker at the gathering was Professor Craig J Richardson, an American economist and author of a book 'The Collapse of Zimbabwe in the Wake of the 2000 – 2003 land reforms'. Asked by a Vigil supporter to comment on studies by British academics Ian Scoones and Joseph Hanlon painting land reform in a positive light, Professor Richardson said 'The studies I have seen were carried out in a specific area and were unrepresentative. The growth they showed was because they were starting from zero, giving a misleading impression'.

- The Vigil presented a fifth anniversary cake (made by Chipo Parirenyatwa) to Ben Freeth the executive director of the Mike Campbell Foundation. Vigil supporters ended the evening by dancing and singing Vigil protest songs for the audience as they left.

- The picture of oppression described by Bishop Magaya was borne out by a report in the UK Guardian on Friday: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/28/record-levels-of-assault-abduction-and-torture-reported-in-zimbabwe>

- Deborah Jandles and Edwin Kamanda of a Zimbabwe prayer group joined us today for a prayer vigil. Together with our sister Beverly Mutandiro, they led prayers for Zimbabwe to coincide with prayers being said there and Bev led the singing. We plan to have monthly prayer vigils.

- Thanks to those who arrived early to help set up: Kevin Gondo, Raymond Gundula, Isabell Gwatidzo, Deborah Jandles, Josephine Jombe, Prosper Karuru, Phillip Mahlahla, Roseline Mukucha, Alfredy Mukuvare, Esther Munyira, Mduduzi Ndlovu, Marlon Nyamakanga, Chipo Parirenyatwa, Douglas and Maureen Tavengwa. Thanks to Roseline, Josephine and Maureen for helping at the front table, to Esther and Nancy Makurira for handing out flyers, to Chipo P, Prosper and Nomusa Dube for selling 'Mugabe must go / has gone' wristbands and to Phillip, Alfredy, Douglas, Marlon, Kevin, Munyaradzi and Mduduzi for putting up the banners.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/> . 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>

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FOR THE RECORD: 48 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR Central London branch meeting.** Saturday 5th November from 11 am to 1.30 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see below.

- **ROHR National Executive meeting.** Saturday 5th November from 1.30 pm. 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 5th 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. 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.

- **MDC London branch meeting.** Saturday 5th November from 12.30 – 2 pm. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL. Contact: Sharon Moyo (branch organizing secretary 07877224113) and Clemence Munyukwi (07889 667686 branch secretary).

- **Monthly Itai Dzamara protest** Saturday 12th November. From 2 – 6 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. The protest is to mark twenty months since Dzamara's abduction by intelligence agents.

- **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 12th November from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland

Zim activists denied UK visas – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 29th October 2016

Written by Administrator

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High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

- **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>