

There was little expectation at the Vigil that the visit to Harare by the SADC troika would produce any relief for the desperate people of Zimbabwe. None of us could recall Angola and Swaziland, or even Mozambique, standing up for human rights in Zimbabwe – let alone face to face with Mugabe. But there was a feeling that at least it might expose the SADC troika to the realities of life in Zimbabwe – that is, if their delegations left their five star hotels for long enough to notice the collapse of the country . . . the queues at the banks, the barren shops, the streams of stinking sewage in the high-density suburbs, the erratic electricity and water supplies, the run-down hospitals, the empty schools, the starving people . . .

We are gloomy that the Vigil demands for free and fair elections and an end to human rights abuses will be met any time soon unless South Africa under its new leadership takes a firmer line with Mugabe.

The Vigil has now sent our petition to the European Union urging it to freeze government to government aid to SADC countries unless SADC upholds its obligations to the people of Zimbabwe rather than supports Mugabe and his fat cats. A copy of our representations has been sent to the SADC Secretariat suggesting that Zimbabwe be suspended from membership of SADC and that the Mugabe regime should be denied visas for SADC countries and have their assets frozen. A copy has also been sent to the AU Chairman, President Kikwete of Tanzania, and it is to him that the Vigil is now looking to apply greater pressure.

On a happier note, the Vigil celebrated with a cake the birthday of Fungayi Mabhunhu of the Vigil management team, who joins us every week come rain or shine.

During the week, six Vigil members (Jenatry Muranganwa, Dumi Tutani, Anges Zengeya, Moses Kandiyawo, Kelvin Kamipura and Gugu Ndlovu-Tutani) participated in a Black History event at City and Islington College in London. Over the years we have forged a close relationship with the College who invite us back for our singing and dancing each year. Some good links were formed with staff, students and local groups.

As we mentioned last week, the Vigil was approached by Caribbean Labour Solidarity who wanted a Zimbabwean speaker. We are pleased that one of regular supporters, Simon Mambongo, will be representing us and he would welcome support. See 'for your diary' for details of the meeting. We notice that many people who used to support Mugabe as a liberator

are reappraising their position. There are more and more articles critical of Mugabe in newspapers in the formerly supportive Afro-Caribbean world.

For latest Vigil pictures see the link in the updates column.

FOR THE RECORD: 136 signed the register.

FOR YOUR DIARY:

* **Central London Zimbabwe Forum.** Monday, 27th October, at 7.30 pm. Postponed from last week, Trudy Stevenson, Secretary for Policy and Research of Mutambara MDC, will update the forum about the elections, the appointment of the Speaker and the power sharing talks. Venue: The Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth St, London SW1H 9BN (020 7227 4900). Nearest station: St. James' Park.

* **ROHR meeting in Manchester.** Saturday, 1st November 2008, 12.00 – 4.00 pm. Venue: Afewe Pub, Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester, M15 5TR. For information call Moses Nyagotsi on 07778 547 971 or Paradzai Mapfumo 07932 216 070 or 07533 831 617.

* **ROHR meeting in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.** Sunday, 2nd November 2008, 12.00 – 4.00 pm. Venue: Chervron Community Centre, Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 2HQ. For information call T Musariri on 07765 055 095, T Mauwa 07832 354 304 or P Mapfumo 07533 831 617 or 07932 216 070.

8 Caribbean Labour Solidarity meeting. Sunday, 2nd November at 12 noon. The speaker is Simon Mambongo of the Vigil who will talk about developing conditions in Zimbabwe. Venue: HCD, 62 Beechwood Road, Hackney London E8 (off Dalston Lane E8) Station; Dalston Kingsland, Buses: 28, 30, 38, 242, 277, 149, 243.

* **Next Glasgow Vigil.** Saturday, 8th November 2008, 2 – 6 pm. Venue: Argyle Street Precinct. For more information contact: Patrick Dzimba, 07990 724 137.

* **Zimbabwe Association's Women's Weekly Drop-in Centre.** Fridays 10.30 am – 4 pm. Venue: The Fire Station Community and ICT Centre, 84 Mayton Street, London N7 6QT, Tel: 020 7607 9764. Nearest underground: Finsbury Park. For more information contact the Zimbabwe Association 020 7549 0355 (open Tuesdays and Thursdays).