

Happy New Year. We are now well into our seventh year outside the Embassy – more determined than ever. It was cold – the bleak midwinter – but that was the least of our worries. At this time of year it is the separation from our families that is the most painful thing.

We were joined by Sungirayi Shikara, who afterwards wrote to thank the Vigil for the comfort it had given him. He said he had been unable to return home for the funeral of one of his 9-year-old twin daughters. “I say to my daughter Mildred may your little soul rest in peace daddy will always love you sweetheart my angel”.

Competition for the Vigil came from demonstrators campaigning for the suffering people of Gaza

We're often asked where we stand on issues like this:

Gaza

,
Iraq

, Afghanistan etc. The simple answer is that we have no position on anything but

Zimbabwe

. (We are sorry that both

Israel

and Arab countries seem to be supporting Mugabe.)

London

's

Gaza

demonstrators were long gone before we had finished our Vigil in the dark with only our singing and dancing to keep us going – and the companionship of course.

Zimbabwe Vigil Diary 3rd January 2009

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 04 January 2009 15:17 - Last Updated Thursday, 08 January 2009 10:04

A man came by complaining about all the Mercedes parked outside the Zimbabwean Ambassador's residence in North London. He said why don't we protest there? Good idea . . . perhaps we should liberate some of the cars too.

Chipo Chaya of the Vigil management team continued to collect CVs for the Citizens for Sanctuary campaign for Zimbabweans to be allowed to work in the UK. These will be presented to
Downing Street
on Tuesday, 13th January. See "For Your Diary" for details of the event.

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Last week we gave a brief account of the Vigil's activities in the first six months of last year. Herewith the last half of the year. Next week we will give a summary of the growth of our partner organisation ROHR in 2008. The material is drawn from our Vigil diaries.

5th July 2008

A big crowd attended the Vigil to launch our new petition calling on FIFA to move the World Cup from South Africa: "With the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe and the likelihood of unrest spreading to South Africa we call upon FIFA to move the 2010 World Cup from South Africa to a safer venue. By the time the World Cup takes place South Africa's support of the Mugabe regime will have made the whole region unsafe because millions more refugees will flee Zimbabwe prompting further xenophobic violence in neighbouring countries."

11th July 2008

Vigil members took a leading role today in a service at Parliament's own parish church, St Margaret's, next to Westminster Abbey, addressed by the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu. The occasion was a service of prayer for the people of Zimbabwe called 'Restore Zimbabwe'. Chipo

Chaya and Luka Phiri of the Vigil management team read a lesson in Shona and Ndebele respectively. Chipo also conducted the Zimbabwean choir and Vigil Co-ordinator Dumi Tutani led dancing below the altar. Vigil members gave testimony as 'Voices of Zimbabwe'.

8th August 2008

There was big media attendance at the joint demonstration outside the Chinese Embassy in London to coincide with the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing.

Television teams from British and foreign news organisations spent four hours with us.

It was an uplifting experience working with other oppressed peoples in protest at China's support of dictators. It is difficult to say how many people attended because the Burmese and Tibetans mobilised at different times but the Zimbabweans and Darfurians were there from beginning to end.

A highlight was a symbolic tableau depicting Mugabe, Bashir of Sudan and Than Shwe of Burma chained to a figure representing China against the backdrop of a black coffin representing the millions of victims of the three dictators.

20th September 2008

Our doubts about the power-sharing agreement seem to have been borne out. The word we get from relatives and friends is that ZANU-PF seem to have no understanding of what power-sharing means.

Vigil representatives went to a meeting in

London

on Tuesday (16/9)

organised by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. It was addressed by Jenni Williams of WOZA and

Abel Chikomo, Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum.

A few people expressed misgivings about the power-sharing arrangement but Jenni and Abel and most of the audience were reasonably optimistic. (We weren't.)

11th October 2008

Friends from times past joined us in brilliant sunshine for the Vigil to launch our 7th year outside the Embassy. Unfortunately Glenys Kinnock MEP was unable to be with us to receive our petition to the EU so we sending it to Brussels by post:

Letter to the European Union

“The Zimbabwe Vigil wishes to submit a petition calling on European Union countries to suspend government-to-government aid to members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) because of their failure to help the suffering people of Zimbabwe

. As you will see, the petition has been signed by thousands of people from all over the world who have recently passed by our Vigil and share our anxiety about the crisis in our homeland. The Vigil condemns SADC for recognising Mugabe as President when SADC's own election observers criticised the polls this year as deeply flawed. Mugabe consequently feels free to disregard a power-sharing deal signed last month -- despite the deepening humanitarian crisis. The Vigil wants the money saved by our proposal -- and it amounts to many hundreds of millions of pounds a year -- to be used to finance refugee camps in South Africa

,
Botswana

,
Zambia
and
Mozambique

to which Zimbabweans can flee for their lives without fear of prompting more xenophobic violence.”

1st November 2008

Vigil supporters were shocked by the murder of Osborne Kachuru of ROHR. He was beaten to death at ZANU PF's offices in Fourth Street

, Harare

, after a peaceful demonstration during the SADC talks on Monday. We are told that the Zanu PF political commissar Eliot Manyika was responsible and the Vigil swears to leave no stone unturned to make sure he eventually faces justice.

(Press Report: "Elliot Manyika, the ZANU PF political commissar whose name is synonymous with violence, died on Saturday (6/12) following a road accident along the Zvishavane-Mbalabala road.") □ □

26th November 2008

Open letter from the Zimbabwe Vigil to South Africa and the Elders

The dishonesty, hypocrisy and ignorance emerging from South Africa in the past week stabs at the heart of all those working for democracy in Zimbabwe

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The group of three 'Elders' spent a couple of days in South Africa talking about Zimbabwe and say they have been shocked by what they have learnt. Where have they been for the past 10 years? Have they read nothing, heard nothing?

Even though they were not allowed into Zimbabwe, they submitted a report to South Africa's President Motlanthe. He says he was shocked by the report and talks about 'quibbling over ministries'. Where has he been for the past 10 years? Has he read nothing, heard nothing?

They say the situation is desperate – and so it is – but it is not helped by this dishonesty, hypocrisy and ignorance. They say the Zimbabwean party leaders must put aside their differences and join in a power-sharing government to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe

– as if another short-sighted and deceitful agreement like the one signed in September will do anything to improve the situation.

For our part the Vigil wants to see:

1. No recognition of Mugabe's illegitimate regime
2. Neighbouring countries to refuse visas to members of the regime
3. A freeze on the assets of members of the regime
4. UN sanctions on the regime
5. The establishment of refugee camps in countries bordering Zimbabwe where desperate Zimbabweans can seek food, medical attention, shelter and education no longer available at home.

6th December 2008

The leader of the UK Liberal Democrat Party, Nick Clegg MP, visited the Vigil and called for international action to oust Mugabe. Addressing Vigil supporters, Mr Clegg condemned the brutality of the Mugabe regime. He said it was a stain on the conscience of the world. The UN, he said, must take any measures necessary to remove Mugabe. The Lib Dem leader paid tribute to the persistence of the Vigil and declared 'you will prevail in the end'.

20th December 2008

There was massive media presence because of the juxtaposition of cholera and Christmas. We were particularly pleased to have the SABC with us because our main message is addressed to South Africa. We are encouraged that the rest of the world seems to be coming around to our view – both our petitions are aimed at pressing South Africa to take action against Mugabe. Father Cholera had an exhausting time sweating behind his Mugabe mask. When he appeared in his Santa Claus outfit he was mobbed by television crews (Sky, CNN, Channel 4, Aljazeera and others). He cut down from the trees beautifully wrapped Christmas presents and handed them to Vigil supporters representing the people of Zimbabwe

. They were labelled:

cholera, anthrax, starvation, hunger, violence, murder, rape, torture, greed, injustice, destruction, death, corruption, lies, inflation, AIDS, malaria, devastation, kleptocracy, terror.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 157 signed the register.

FOR YOUR DIARY:

· **ROHR Birmingham Fashion Show / Fundraising.** Saturday 10 January 2009 at Bishop Latimer Church Hall, Beeton Road, off Handsworth New Road, Birmingham B18 4QD. Entry fee £3. There will be raffles including half year subscriptions paid up on your membership. Come and let's revive our country. Contact: Em Zibgowa 07846005120, Des Parayiwa 07815565335, Reb Mlambo 07817585742, Tsitsi Mavhura 07932477842.

· **Citizens for Sanctuary Campaign for Zimbabweans to be allowed to work.** On Tuesday, 13th January 2009 they will be handing over Zimbabwean CVs to 10 Downing Street

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. Participants are asked to assemble at
12 noon
in Richmond Terrace opposite
10 Downing Street

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Photocall at 12.30 and at
12:45
a delegation of six Zimbabweans will enter
Downing Street
and deliver a
dossier of CVs
collected from Zimbabweans in the
UK

who have skills that are going to waste and want to work. For more info
contact Jonathan Cox, Lead Organiser,
Citizens for Sanctuary
Campaign: 07919 484066.

. **ROHR Launch Meeting in Northampton.** Saturday 17 January 2009 at Alliston Gardens
Community Centre,
2 Adelaide Street

,
Northampton
NN2 6AR

from 1330-1730hrs. Contact Anthony Chimimba 07799855806, Shenete Vushe 07818661362,
Angeline Nehanda 07915085123.

. **Next Glasgow Vigil.** Saturday, 17th January 2009, 2 – 6 pm. Venue: Argyle Street
Precinct. For more information contact: Patrick Dzimba, 07990 724 137
, Tafadzwa Musemwa 07954 344 123 and Roggers Fatiya 07769 632 687

. **ROHR Newcastle General Meeting.** Saturday 24 January 2009 at 61 Bishops Benwell
NE15 6RY Newcastle
from 1400 - 1730 hrs. Contact: Linda Chingwinyiso 07894142263, Joseph Madziva
07905850073 or Fadzai Mudekwa 07727221873.

. **Unite Zimnites.** Saturday, 24th January 2009 at 7 pm. King's College London's student-le
d charity Project
Zimbabwe
is holding a fundraiser for
Zimbabwe

. The event is an African themed open mic night with over 8 acts coming to perform.

Money raised will go towards their MedYouth Project, a life skills programme being taught to
school children in

Bulawayo

next summer. Venue: Function Room, Walkabout,
Temple

. Cost: £10/£5NUS. For more information, check:

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<http://www.kclprojectzimbabwe.blogspot.com/>

· **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).