

Zimbabwe Vigil in Olympics Protest in London

Written by Administrator

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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. They included a team from the SABC and we took the opportunity to explain why the Vigil is calling for FIFA to move the 2010 World Cup from South Africa .

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. There must have been well over 500 demonstrators in all, many of them in ethnic dress, making it a very colourful and vibrant occasion. Certainly the Burmese and Tibetans are Olympic champions at chanting slogans against Chinese oppression!

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

The gathering was addressed by Kate Hoey, MP, Chair of the All-Party parliamentary group on Zimbabwe , who spoke forcefully on Zimbabwe . Another speaker was the human rights activist Peter Tatchell, who condemned China as rapaciously imperialist.

The demonstration ended after the Tibetan flag was raised at 13.08, the exact time of the opening of the Games. This was to symbolise the refusal of China to recognise Tibet as a nation to be represented at the Games.

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