

Mourning the Death of Democracy

Written by Administrator

Friday, 27 June 2008 19:47 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 October 2008 19:55

Zimbabweans in the UK marked Election Run-off day with anger and anguish. Some 150 people gathered outside the Zimbabwe Embassy to protest against the death of democracy in Zimbabwe. The centrepiece of the demonstration was a black-draped coffin which was presented to the nearby South African High Commission, containing a petition calling on President Mbeki to stop supporting former President Mugabe. The South Africans would not allow our nominated person to present the petition because he was wearing our Mugabe mask so it was presented instead by his dear wife Grace dressed from top-to-toe in Harrods. The crowd outside the High Commission shouted "Mbeki must go, Mbeki out, out, out" with the encouragement of the well-known South African documentary maker Paul Yule.

[flickr photo=2617298715 size=medium align=centre vspace=10 hspace=10]

Vigil supporters had walked from the Zimbabwe Embassy to the South African High Commission behind the coffin. They carried placards reading "Died for Democracy in Zimbabwe" then the name of one of the many victims of the madness since the first round of elections, followed by "How many more have to die. Speak out." Among the throng outside South Africa House were several elderly British war veterans wearing their medals.

A few snapshots:

- The grief could not be contained when the coffin was laid down in front of the South African High Commission. People knelt by the coffin weeping and praying with anguished faces and patting the coffin.
- The police outside the High Commission fell over with laughter when they saw the old war veterans toyi-toying. The veterans were in Trafalgar Square for a concert in honour of Veterans' Day.

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- Veterans at the Trafalgar Square concert were seen with their hands over their ears to protect them from the loud music of their own concert. We asked the person in charge to turn the amplification down for a few minutes while our friend from St Martin-in-the-Fields, the Reverend Richard Carter, said a prayer for Zimbabwe at 1.45 pm . The military fellow said “Absolutely not. We have a schedule and we are the Ministry of Defence. This is for veterans.” Our representative replied “Well, we are the Zimbabwe Vigil and we are for dead people”.
- Although Mugabe was not allowed to present the petition, his good lady Grace was allowed to present it. So now we know that even Grace doesn't support Mugabe.
- The clouds burst just at the time when our petition was handed over to the South Africans. The world weeps for Zimbabwe .
- A man from the Embassy came and complained to one of our white supporters “There are not any white names on these posters”. He was referring to the posters naming the victims of the Zanu-PF onslaught since the first round of the elections. He seemed to assume that it was OK for black Africans to kill each other.
- At the end of the day we tied the 100 placards in the bright colours of the Zimbabwe flag with the names of those who have died since the first round of the elections around the metal barriers that enclose our protest. We also left the black-draped, coffin-shaped ballot box propped up against the Embassy door with a cartoon showing Mbeki and Mugabe laughing “Crisis, what crisis” against a background of burning xenophobic violence.
- Thanks to our mock Mugabe and Grace, Fungayi Mabhunu and Gugu Ndlovu Tutani, and to her husband Dumi Tutani who led the music with the help of Jenatry Muranganwa Thanks so much to our young supporters who helped to make this demonstration possible: Felix and Winny for the coffin and Hazel, Rowan, Annie and Rebecca for the posters. Thanks also to David who was responsible for the brilliant artwork of the placards and to Patty who galvanized everyone to make this possible. .
- Jack Cooper took pains to join us. He now lives in Guatemala ... an exile like so many..