

## **UK Zimbabweans appeal to Cameron**

Written by Administrator  
Saturday, 16 March 2013 22:33 -

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### **Media Notice from the Zimbabwe Vigil – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

Zimbabweans in the UK are to present a petition to 10 Downing Street on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March appealing to the UK government not to send home failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers because of election violence.

A letter to the Prime Minister, David Cameron, says there has been a disturbing campaign of police harassment of civil society organisations ahead of elections in Zimbabwe expected in July, accompanied by increasing violence. The letter says 'We expect the situation to worsen as polling approaches because President Mugabe's Zanu PF thugs are given impunity by the police to terrorise opponents'.

The petition has been organised by Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR), the sister organisation of the Zimbabwe Vigil, which has been demonstrating outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London every Saturday for the past eleven years in support of free and fair elections.

The petition is being presented on the same day as a referendum in Zimbabwe to decide whether to adopt a new constitution. The three parliamentary parties are campaigning for a yes vote but the proposed constitution has been rejected by many civil society organisations.

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ROHR spokesperson Fungayi Mabhunu said: 'The referendum is a charade. President Mugabe has once again outwitted the Movement for Democratic Change. Four years and more than \$100 million have been wasted on this defective constitution when what is really needed is action to ensure free and fair elections'.

The Vigil is being joined by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), formerly the Anti-Apartheid Movement, to mark referendum day. Passers-by will be invited to write messages of hope for peaceful elections on red paper roses to be used to form a montage.

### Timetable for the day

- 2 pm: meet outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, 429 Strand, London WC2R 0JR for the regular Vigil. Nearest station: Charing Cross.
- 3.45: leave the Vigil for 10 Downing Street.
- 4.30: Presentation of petition to 10 Downing Street.
- 6.15: Zimbabwe Action Forum. Mark Beacon, Campaigns Manager of ACTSA, will discuss how the Vigil and ACTSA can work more closely

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together to deliver freedom in Zimbabwe

Venue

: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. Nearest station: Temple (District and Circle lines). For more detailed directions, check Events and Notices on our website:

[www.zimvigil.co.uk](http://www.zimvigil.co.uk)

### Text of letter to David Cameron

Dear Mr Cameron

We respectfully submit the following petition on behalf of Zimbabwean failed asylum seekers:

***Petition to the UK Border Agency:*** *We, the undersigned members of the Zimbabwe Community in the United Kingdom, friends of Zimbabwe and human rights defenders, are deeply disturbed by allegations that deportees to Zimbabwe are being threatened with sedation to facilitate their forced removal from the UK. We are also concerned by the practice of detaining asylum seekers when they sign-in. We believe this approach discourages compliance and instead drives the frightened asylum seeker under the radar and possibly into crime. We also raise concern that asylum claims made in detention are being fast tracked to expedite the deportation decision without full recourse to the law. We call upon the UK immigration*

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*authorities to respect international human rights statutes in their treatment of asylum seekers throughout the asylum process. We beg the UK government to seriously consider deferring deportations to Zimbabwe to at least 6 months after the planned 2013 elections which we believe will be, like those before them, violent.*

We wish to draw your attention to a disturbing campaign of police harassment of civil society organisations in Zimbabwe ahead of the elections expected in July. This has been accompanied by increasing violence. The MDC party of Morgan Tsvangirai has submitted a dossier to the Southern African Development Community detailing 120 incidents of violence in the past few months. We expect the situation to worsen as polling approaches because President Mugabe's Zanu PF thugs are given impunity by the police to terrorise opponents.

We Zimbabweans in exile and supporters ask you to pass this petition on to the UK Border Agency so that they can be reminded to respect human rights in their treatment of asylum seekers. In particular, we suggest a moratorium on sending Zimbabweans home until the violence ceases.

The petition has been organised by Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe, a sister organisation of the Zimbabwe Vigil, which has been demonstrating outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London every Saturday for the past eleven years in support of free and fair elections.

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### Contacts

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