

The world marked International Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December but there was nothing to celebrate in Zimbabwe. The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, which groups 350 citizens' organisations, said that despite claims of a 'new dispensation' President Mnangagwa's government presided over a toxic political environment coupled with high levels of corruption.

It said: 'Draconian laws, judicial capture, arbitrary arrests, persecution of civil society actors and the ongoing arbitrary constitutional amendments continue to reverse the democratic gains attained by the adoption of a new constitution in 2013'. (See: <https://www.thezimbabwean.co/2021/12/crisis-coalition-statement-on-international-human-rights-day-2/>.)

The Zimbabwean Peace Project, which monitors human rights violations, says it is now clear that promises of reform made by Mnangagwa when he came to power 4 years ago were insincere because there was 'sustained intolerance' of dissent, opposition political activity and human rights work.

It said that in those 4 years it had recorded 9,345 human rights violations: 'In all this, state security agents, and officials or members of the ruling Zanu PF have been the major perpetrators. The violations include killings, abductions, torture, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, and harassment and intimidation.'

‘Between November 2020 and November 2021, there was an acceleration of the pace, and this is most likely because election year is drawing closer and the ruling party, whose officials have proclaimed they will not accept an election defeat, are ring-fencing themselves through various strategies.’

The Peace Project said that discrimination was widespread especially in rural communities ‘where villagers rely on aid, and Zanu PF used its influence in government to influence the determination of who gets or does not get aid. The goal is to intimidate, isolate, weaken and impoverish members of the community who have the courage to assert their constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of association and assembly.’ (See: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/mnangagwas-4-years-as-president-destructive-zpp/>.)

For its part, the Zimbabwean chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa said Mnangagwa was increasingly turning Zimbabwe into an authoritarian state by introducing new laws to crush dissent ahead of the 2023 elections. It said: ‘in essence, the laws seek to curtail and criminalise civil society's work at an unprecedented scale’ – an apparent reference to the new Cyber Security and Data Protection Act which the President recently signed into law which places controls on social media.

Mnangagwa’s aspiration to improve relations with the West will not be helped by this latest piece of repressive legislation. He was notably absent from the list of Southern African presidents consulted by the UK about the latest travel restrictions it has imposed because of the new Covid variant Omicron (see: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/uk-pm-snubs-mnangagwa-in-sadc-travel-ban-consultations/>).

## Other points

- NewZimbabwe says business leaders have advised the government to bring the US dollar back into circulation ‘and rescue the collapsing economy’. The Zimbabwean dollar, brought back upon the scrapping of the US dollar as Zimbabwe’s currency in 2018, has been steadily losing value. It is now trading at over US\$1: \$200 on the black market while the official rate is at \$1: \$110 (see: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/bring-back-the-us-business-tells-mnangagwa/>).

- Because of concerns about the new Omicron Covid variant, the Vigil Co-ordinators have decided to suspend the physical meetings at the Embassy until after Christmas. We will review the situation in the new year. In the meantime we will continue to run the Virtual Vigil as we did during lockdown. The Virtual Vigil shows the powers-that-be that we are still campaigning against their iniquitous behaviour and enables our activists to continue our protest and allows us to support them individually. To participate in the Virtual Vigil, activists who wish to participate virtually should pose in their Vigil / ROHR / Zimbabwe regalia with a relevant poster and take a photo / selfie during normal Vigil hours (Saturdays between 2 and 5 pm). The photos will be labelled with your name and uploaded onto the Vigil website, the Vigil’s Flickr photo page and Facebook. You will also be listed on the Vigil diary as having participated in that day’s virtual Vigil. There will be a small charge to cover admin costs, the ongoing upkeep of the Vigil and our support for the human rights work of ROHR, our sister organisation in Zimbabwe.

- For Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

## Events and Notices:

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil’s partner organisation based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organisation on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil’s mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events,

sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is

<http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

[http://www](http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/)

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- **The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency'** is based on our weekly diaries. It records how events in Zimbabwe have unfolded as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil. All proceeds go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

- **Facebook pages** :

Vigil : <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>