

It has been a happy Christmas for China which has acquired one of Zimbabwe's main assets – a lithium mine – as it continues its worldwide search for precious metals.

**Lithium is a key element in the production of rechargeable batteries to meet the growing demand for electric vehicles. The Chinese company Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt is apparently paying US\$422 million for the Arcadia Mine. For the ordinary people of Zimbabwe there will be little benefit from the deal, except the prospect of providing slave labour for unpopular Chinese employers (see: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/12/chinas-huayou-buys-lithium-mine-in-zimbabwe-for-422-mln/>).**

It has, by all accounts, been a gloomy Christmas for Zimbabweans with sharply rising prices and a weakening currency. Spokesperson for the National Consumer Rights Association Effie Ncube said this had dampened the festive mood (see: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/12/gloomy-xmas-rising-prices-costs-dampen-spirits/>),

People found it impossible to get cash from banks and bureaux de change. Many queued for days. NewZimbabwe quoted a man as saying men and women with babies had been sleeping

in queues without any ablution facilities. 'They have turned the parkade into their toilet and the car park is filled with a stench of human excreta.' He added: 'We see some weird smart dressed people who walk in and leave with money with no hustle at all, yet we are dirty and tattered by spending days in queues.' (See: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/bleak-christmas-as-zimbos-spend-days-in-cash-queues/>.)

In another development, the former Zanu PF MP for Mutasa South Irene Zindi spoke of corruption in the party's provincial elections. Newsday said the allegation was confirmed by Politburo member Engelbert Rugeje who was quoted as saying: 'The issue of rigging and intimidation is not only in Manicaland but it is serious in other areas'. (See: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/12/ex-zanu-pf-mp-fumes-over-vote-rigging/>.)

## **Other points**

- Four United Nations special rapporteurs have criticised the Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Amendment Bill. They said it flew in the face of international conventions on human rights. 'All of these provisions raise serious concerns about the ability of PVOs to function truly independently, free from State interference.' (See:

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/12/un-condemns-anti-ngo-bill/>)

- Vigil activists wish the people of Zimbabwe a happier new year. We will continue campaigning for you.

- 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/>

. 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>