

Election fever – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 8th January 2022

Zimbabwean politics was given an electric charge on Thursday with President Mnangagwa's proclamation of a long-delayed date for by-elections for about 133 vacancies in Parliament and local authorities. The elections will take place on 26th March but the nomination court to register candidates will sit on 26th January – spurring the rival MDC factions into frantic action.

Most of the vacancies were caused by the MDC T party of Douglas Mwonozora who recalled dozens of the rival MDC Alliance MPS and councillors after the controversial Supreme Court ruling in 2019 that Chamisa's election as party leader was unlawful.

After the President's announcement, Mwonozora rushed to a meeting with Mnangagwa at State House. He denied it had anything to do with the by-elections but announced that his party would contest them under the MDC Alliance name, forcing Chamisa to rebrand his party.

MDC Alliance spokesperson Fadzayi Mahere said the election date should be accompanied by a clear reform road map that paves the way for an undisputed election. 'The bad governance and legitimacy crisis that continues to plague the Mnangagwa regime is a direct result of the disputed election of 2018,' she said

(see:

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2022/01/by-elections-set-for-march/>

).

For his part Chamisa has been speaking about the crisis caused by mass migration to South Africa, blaming it on the failings of the Zanu PF government. 'We must fix our homebase and that which has destroyed our beautiful and great country', he tweeted, adding 'In order to solve the immigration challenges we must end elections rigging and citizens repression.' (See:

<https://www.newzimbabwe.com/chamisa-laments-zim-sa-migration-crisis/>

.)

In sharp contrast to the Zimbabwe situation, the *Zambian Observer* newspaper says the new president Hakainde Hichilema has introduced sweeping reforms in the brief time since taking office last August. It said that no government in Africa had acted so quickly (see: <http://zambianobserver.com/zambian-president-breaks-the-record/>

<http://zambianobserver.com/zambian-president-breaks-the-record/>

).

Other points

- The UK Guardian newspaper has given prominence to a lengthy article by Nyasha Chingono on the mounting opposition of rural communities in Zimbabwe to Chinese mining. The article said villagers saw little benefit and complained they are being exploited, living in homes damaged by blasts and unable to farm polluted land (see: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jan/07/zimbabwe-china-mines-pollution-evictions>

).

- The Central Intelligence Organisation has been ordered to investigate how the contract for the printing of ballot papers used in the recent provincial Zanu PF elections was given to a

private company rather than the party's own printers. There is suspicion that some party officials had interests in the private company (see: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/massive-corruption-scandal-erupts-at-zanu-pf-hq/>).

- Because of concerns about the Omicron Covid variant, the Vigil Co-ordinators have decided to suspend the physical meetings at the Embassy. We will review this when the situation improves. 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>