

The Zimbabwe Embassy refused to accept a letter from the Vigil on Friday and instead called the police to clear us away from the building. The letter protests at the involvement of Embassy officials in the asylum process – not that the Embassy waited to read it before pressing the emergency button.

Ephraim Tapa, President of Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe, led the delegation. He said: 'We put the original letter into the post as per police advice and slipped a copy under the door of the Embassy. However, they repeatedly kicked our letter back and for a while it was one of us pushing the letter in from the outside and them pushing it out from the other side. Eventually we relented and retreated to our usual space. It was an interesting, fruitful but funny midday indeed!

How things have changed since the new Ambassador Colonel Christian M Katsande came to London last year, when he approached the Vigil, bought a copy of our book 'Zimbabwe Emergency' and said we must have a meeting with him. Now that we take up his invitation we have the door slammed in our face.

Our letter read:

Dear Ambassador

The involvement of Zimbabwe Embassy officials in Home Office interviews with asylum seekers is causing much alarm among the Zimbabwean diaspora in the UK.

We regard Zimbabwe now as a military dictatorship where human rights abuses are rife and opponents of the government are at serious risk. On top of that, we know that the economy is in a state of collapse with fuel and power shortages, growing poverty and widespread hunger.

Asylum seekers fear that the involvement of Embassy officials in the asylum process will lead to their identification as opponents of the government with consequent victimisation on return to

Zimbabwe.

If anything we believe the Zimbabwean authorities should help expatriates achieve settled status in the UK so that they can acquire further education, train and work and remit foreign exchange to Zimbabwe while preparing to go back and rebuild the country.

We call on the Zimbabwe government to put an end to human rights abuse, investigate past atrocities and bring perpetrators to book, rebuilding investor confidence by facilitating clean politics.

Events at home in the past week have confirmed what we say in the letter, with the arrest of seven human rights activists accused of plotting against the government and reports that, while people are starving, millions of dollars are being spent on equipment for the security forces, including water cannons and tear gas cannisters.

For a taste of the paranoia gripping Zanu PF, we suggest you look at the Herald's hysterical report 'US-backed demo stutters' (see: <https://www.herald.co.zw/us-backed-demo-stutters/>).

Other points

- Corruption is now endemic in Zimbabwe so it comes as little surprise that it even extends to Amnesty International, which has suspended all operations in Zimbabwe after evidence of massive fraud by local management (see: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/amnesty-international-shuts-down-zimbabwe-operations-over-fraud/>)

- Thanks to those who were at Friday's well-attended protest: Shylette Chipangura, Pamela Chirimuta, Babula Gwatiringa, Patrick Hale, Simbarashe Jingo, Jane Kaphuwa, Jonathan Kariwo, Chido Makawa, Heather Makawa, Patricia Masamba, Kudzai Mashiri, Lucia Mudzimu, Esther Munyira, Collen Mupazviriho, Tapiwa Muskwe, Mary Muteyerwa, Viola Nyika, Tsitsi Nyirongo, Sikhumbuzule, Sibanda, Locardia Takawira and Ephraim Tapa. Special thanks to Esther and Ephraim for organising the protest and the register and to Lucia and Mary for leading the singing.

- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the front table today and put up the banners: Tatenda Mandika, Rosemary Maponga, Gertrude Mudede, Esther Munyira, Fungisai Mupandira, Bridget Mupotsa, Hazvinei Sali and Ephraim Tapa. Thanks to Rosemary and

Esther for looking after the front table, to Hazvinei, Bridget and Simbarashe Jingo for handing out flyers, to Fungisai for drumming and to Esther and Fungisai for photos.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 13 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 8th June from 11.30 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Road SE1 8XX. Contact: Ephraim Tapa 07940793090, Patricia Masamba 07708116625.

- **ROHR fundraising dinner.** Saturday 29th June from 6 pm till late. Venue: Zazas, 108 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1JE. Contact: Esther Munyira 07492058109, Fungisai Mupandira 07468504393, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013, Patricia Masamba 07708116625, Simbarashe Jingo 07787870888, Pamela Chirimuta 07762737339, Sikhumbuzule Sibanda 07912210225, and Farai Muroiwa 07365431776.

- **ROHR sponsored walk.** Saturday 27th July. Contact: Esther Munyira 07492058109, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013, Patricia Masamba and Farai Muroiwa 07365431776. More information as plans progress.

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization 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/zimbabwевigil> ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF:

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