

Picture link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/16282015089/sizes/z/>

Zimbabweans in the UK have launched a campaign to persuade MPs to ask for a parliamentary debate on the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe in the fallow period before the UK general elections on 7th May.

MPs have little parliamentary business to attend to in the next three months and the Vigil understands they are being given time off to campaign in their constituencies. We believe this is a window of opportunity to press for a parliamentary discussion of the British government's policy on Zimbabwe. After all, even if they are not British citizens, Zimbabweans have a right to vote here.

The Zimbabwe Action Forum, meeting after the Vigil, discussed a template letter people could send to their MPs calling for a debate:

Dear MP

I am a Zimbabwean living in your constituency. I write to ask you to support a suggestion that there should be a parliamentary debate on Zimbabwe.

The idea of a debate was supported by former Africa Minister, Mark Simmonds, who kindly spoke to Zimbabweans at a recent meeting in Portcullis House (see Zimbabwe Vigil diary of 24th

January 2015:

<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/650-progress--zimbabwe-vigil-diary-24th-january-2015>). He said it had been some years since the House of Commons had last discussed Zimbabwe and it was time for another debate. He was backed in this by Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West, who had arranged the meeting at the request of Zimbabweans in his constituency. We were also happy to be addressed by Fiona Mactaggart, MP.

I am part of a network of Zimbabweans who are writing to their MPs to drum up support for the debate to be arranged.

I am sure you are aware of the dire situation in Zimbabwe, which was recently identified by the Wall Street Journal as the 4th worst economy in the world (see: http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_w_zim-among-most-repressed-economies-the-zimbabwe-independent/). This partly explains our presence in your generous country.

In brief, all elections in Zimbabwe are rigged, there is no rule of law, corruption is rampant and the new constitution – largely paid for by the British taxpayer – is predictably ignored by the Mugabe Mafia. Yet Britain talks of ‘progress’ and is lifting sanctions!

We want the debate to ask questions such as:

1.

What is the British Government’s policy on Zimbabwe? (This is unclear at present. Why is the British Government being so ingratiating to the Mugabe regime when all it does is spit in their face?)

2.

Why has the UK lifted targeted sanctions against Mugabe’s cronies when the object for imposing them has not been achieved? (Mark Simmonds spoke of ‘progress’: what progress?)

3.

By resuming direct aid to the Mugabe government the EU is further propping up an illegal regime, allowing it to offload onto donors its obligations to the Zimbabwean people in education, health services etc.

4.

What is the UK's policy on sending back Zimbabweans? (It is still unsafe for political activists; there are few jobs and widespread poverty.)

The Forum invited further input on the letter (to be sent to the Vigil Co-ordinator). In the meantime Vigil supporters can send our draft letter to their local MPs, or amend it as they please. When we get further input we will be able to write an expanded letter. But time is pressing as any new government emerging from the May elections is unlikely to have time to discuss Zimbabwe. To find your MP, click on <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>, type in your post code or constituency. This will take you to your MP and their contact details.

Other points

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There was a lot of interest in our montage of photos entitled 'Mugabe falls'. To people who say we shouldn't poke fun at an old man we say a nonagenarian should not cling to office (without a Vice-President at each elbow).

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The Vigil is happy to see that more and more Zimbabwean groups are joining in the 21st February protest outside the Embassy. The theme of the protest, organised by Makusha Mugabe of MDC T, is: 'This must be Mugabe's last year in office'. There will be full details in

next week's diary.

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Our friends in the Occupy Africa Unity Square group tell us that one of its members, Jerimos Mugwenhi, has been brutally assaulted by security agents trying get information about the protest. The leader of the group Itai Dzamara, said: 'We cannot tolerate this any longer' (for the full email see our campaigns page:

<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/652-mugwenhi-of-oaus-brutally-assaulted-and-dumped>

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The Vigil congratulates Kate Hoey MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe, for winning the Dod's Parliamentary Award for International Campaigner of the Year. Kate, a staunch friend of the Vigil, says on her website that the situation in Zimbabwe remains grim and Mugabe's violent misrule still holds back its enormous potential. 'I will continue to speak out and campaign with Zimbabwe's democratic forces to work for a better future for their people'.

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Thanks to Mavis Chisvo, Shingiririrayi Yvonne Bonde, John Burke, Barbara Kachidza, Tanyaradzwa Dhundhu, Linda Sibanda, Fungayi Mabhunu and Veli Mamba for arriving early to help set up the Vigil and to Mavis for looking after the Vigil table throughout the afternoon.

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: 39 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

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ROHR Nottingham Revival Meeting. Saturday 14th February from 2 – 5 pm. Venue: The Sycamore Centre 31 Hungerhill Rd, Nottingham NG3 4NB. For more information please contact: Chair – Chamunorwa Chisuko 07832927609, Vice chair – Nobuhle Mazula 07766927229, Info and Publicity – Miriam Mutanda 07876388963, Secretary – Anesu Mlauzi 07798641426, Organising Secretary – Harmony Mbele 07783061984, Fundraising – Irvine Huni 07955784981, Treasurer – Audrey Chamangira 07745823435. Directions: catch bus 45 from the city centre near Victoria Centre and get off at Hungerhill bus stop. Cross over the pedestrian crossing to Hungerhill and continue down the hill. It's a 3 minute walk from the bus stop.

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Mugabe birthday protest. Saturday 21st February from 2 – 6 pm. Venue: outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, 429 Strand, London WC2R 0JR. More information to follow.

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF). Saturday 21st February from 6.15 pm. Venue: to be advised.

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Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF) meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.

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Next Swaziland Vigil. Saturday 21st February from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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ROHR Slough Branch general meeting. Saturday 21st February from 11.30 am – 2 pm.
Venue: Upton Lea Community Hall, Wexham Road, Slough SL2 5JW. For further information contact : Patricia Masamba (Chair)
07708116625, Nkosi Tshabangu (Vice-Chair)
[07535942709](tel:07535942709)
, Fungisai Mupandira (Organising Secretary) 07758958803.

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting. Saturday 28th February at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement holds monthly meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.

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ROHR Reading Branch general meeting and outreach. Saturday 28 February from 10.30 am – 5 pm. V

venue: RISC 35-39 London Street,
Reading,
Berkshire RG1 4PS

For further enquiries contact:
Information and Publicity Officer: 07888310582

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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.

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Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2014 can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/642-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2014>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2014 Highlights page.

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Facebook pages:

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Vigil: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8157345519&ref=ts>

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

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.co/pages/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights/301811392835>

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SW Radio Africa's website and sound archive is being hosted on www.archive.org . Go to their site and type in swradioafrica which will link you to snapshots of their site over the years and at the top of that page a link to their website where, under podcasts, you will find the audio.

