

The United Nations is understood to be considering a Zimbabwean request to provide emergency aid for Mugabe's 92nd birthday celebrations in Masvingo next month.

UN East and Southern Africa spokesman, Idi Ott, said UNFED had been expecting a request for help because of the severe drought affecting Sub-Saharan Africa. He said there had been surprise at UN headquarters at the lateness of the request because it normally takes some months to mount an international appeal of this magnitude.

'We know that a considerable sum will be required and understand that it is unrealistic to expect Zimbabwe in its straitened circumstances to find the money from its own resources', he said. 'Perhaps given the urgency of the situation Zimbabwe should appeal directly to its all-weather friends. China, Russia and Iran are likely to be supportive. Or Harare could ask South Africa, though we know it has its own problems at present after the debacle at the Wanderers'.

Opposition sources in Zimbabwe say they are amazed that the government has not already approached the UN for food relief to avert looming starvation caused by the drought and crop failures. One spokesman said: 'There is something suspicious about all this. Who exactly asked the UN? The government is on holiday for another two or three weeks and there is no one here to make decisions of this gravity.'

A Zanu PF spokesman was reassuring: 'People need have no fear for Comrade Gushungo. He is well-fed and there will also be enough food for the whole Politburo as well'.

The Vigil is unable to contribute to the celebrations. All our spare money is going to feed our families at home and the malnourished staff at the Embassy. By the way, rumours that the Embassy has closed cannot be confirmed because it never seems to be open anyway.

Lest people think we are treating the plight of those at home lightly, one of us was told today by a 16 year-old relative in Zimbabwe: 'Life is hard, it is tough here but we are now used to the hardships'. He added: 'Ndaishanda Ku ZBC na Paradzayi Tichiita Painting Contracting. Then ma workers epa ZBC wakamisa vanhu basa 300 waingosvika pabasa zvonzi basa rapera without notice wopihwa mari ye 3 months a head kukata vanhu vanhu vari permanent worker'.

We were not surprised to read the depressing report on the situation in Zimbabwe put out recently by the UN news service: <http://m.irinnews.org/Report/102339/New-Year-same-old-problems-for-Zimbabwe#.VpqpwxLSG8>

Other points

- The Vigil sends greetings to Bishop Ancelimo Magaya who says there is a leadership

vacuum in Zimbabwe. Speaking to journalists in Harare, he quoted Matthew 5, v13 which says, *'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men*

' (see:

<http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-leadership-vacuum-evident-in-zim-bishop/>

)

.

· Next week on Saturday 23rd January we will be repeating our successful 'Bring and Share' Vigil as suggested by our supporter Danny Kadiki. Hot food would be much appreciated. The Vigil has a large thermos flask and Chipo Parirenyatwa has arranged with Pizza Hut across the road that they will supply us with hot water so we can make tea and coffee.

· Thanks to those who came early on a bitterly cold day (but thankfully dry) to help set up: Humphrey Dube, Isabell Gwatidzo, Vimbai Karumbidza, Fungayi Mabhunu, Phylis Magejo, Michelle Makoni, Jenniffer Maritsa, Innocent Maya, Rosemary Mupunga, Esther Munyira, Cathrine Musa, Chipo Parirenyatwa and Taurayi Tsandukwa. Special thanks to Humphrey and Innocent for putting up the high banners and to Cathrine for looking after the front table assisted by Chipo and Sharon Moyo.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 32 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Zimbabwe Association Exhibition.** Monday 18th – Friday 24th January. Venue: The Tabernacle, 35 Powis Square, off Portobello Road, London W11 2AY. Opening reception at 6.30 pm on Monday 18th January. If you are planning to go please let the Zimbabwe Association know by emailing: info@zimbabweassociation.org.uk
- **ROHR Central London branch meeting.** Saturday 23rd January from 12 noon – 2 pm. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL. Contact: Fungayi Mabhunu 07907089899, Esther Nyambi 07446210391, Mavis Chisvo 07944612944.
- **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.
- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 23rd January from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. From the Vigil it's about a ten minute walk, in the direction away from Trafalgar Square. The Strand Continental is situated on the south side of the Strand between Somerset House and the turn off onto Waterloo Bridge. The entrance is marked by a sign at street level. It's between a newsagent and an optician. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.
- **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.
- **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 23rd January from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

- **Monthly Itai Dzamara protest.** Saturday 6th February from 2 – 6 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. The protest is to mark eleven months since Dzamara's abduction by intelligence agents.

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

- **Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2015** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/746-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2015>
· Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2015 Highlights page.

- **Facebook pages:**

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

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

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