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Having waited until Mugabe returned from his sacred month-long Christmas holiday abroad, the government finally got around to admitting what it had persistently denied and declared a state of emergency because of food shortages.

The Vigil's sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) expressed the desperation in Zimbabwe by taking part in a Valentine's march in Harare with the theme 'I love you Zimbabwe'. We received this message from a ROHR member: 'The march started at the corner of Inez Terrace and Speke Avenue. We marched into Julius Nyerere then into Nelson Mandela singing the national anthem. As we approached Second Street towards Parliament, where we intended to place a bouquet, we encountered the full force of the vicious riot police. They beat up people badly with baton sticks. Three people are hospitalized at Westend Hospital. One ROHR member is in a bad state.'(for photos see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/90023465@N03/albums/72157664452256902>).

Earlier in the week, speaking at the official launch of the aid appeal, Vice-President Mnangagwa spoke of a food disaster, as if it had suddenly arisen although experts had been warning of it for at least the last six months.

Perhaps he made the mistake of believing the lies of Agriculture Minister Mad Made who said only recently that Zimbabwe had plenty of food in stock. Mnangagwa will also no doubt back Mad Made's insistence that any aid should not include GM food. So donors beware: you could be wasting your money sending us poisonous food when people can starve in a non-GM way.

Mnangagwa was precise about Zimbabwe's requirements, which he said amounted to \$1,572,009,953. This included money to repair irrigation equipment and livestock support and restocking, as well as soap, pharmaceuticals and three dollars for sanitaryware. In short, Zimbabwe needs everything except GM food. Mnangagwa seems to think money grows on trees. Try shaking a baobab. But perhaps our all-weather friends in Beijing will cough up the money as weather includes drought.

The problem is that the experts the Mugabe regime have failed to listen to have warned that leaving an appeal for help too late would mean that many people would die. Apart from raising the money, there is the transport question. Poor harvests in the region means that the food required is simply not available locally and it is now impossible to bring in enough from overseas to avert disaster.

People will starve. Mugabe may not acknowledge it, but people are already starving. Perhaps Mugabe will call off his \$800,000 92

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birthday bash next week to devote the food to the suffering masses. It's what they call a no-brainer . . . obviously the right thing. But the Vigil fears that in Zanu PF's case no-brainer must be taken literally.

Fortunately Saving Grace now comes in. Having been scrimping and skipping meals like the poor, she now finds herself in a position to share her goodies with the masses – or at least the people who attended her rally in Chiweshe.

Her donations were listed as follows:

- 531 tonnes of maize
- 100 tonnes of rice
- tractors
- Internet equipment
- 120 knapsacks
- 7.982 litres of cooking oil
- 5 tonnes of clothes
- 12.000 pairs of shoes
- 50x 300 bags of cement
- 3, 000 kg of salt
- 3,000 'tablets of food'
- 2,000 kg of sugar
- raincoats with a combined weight of 1,095 kg

Perhaps the raincoats were in case the drought is broken – otherwise vote Zanu PF and eat raincoats. But the Vigil asks why, given this largesse, the Zanu PF plutocracy could not simply pass the hat around themselves and come up with a mere \$1.5 billion from their foreign bank accounts.

## **Other points**

- We are continuing our pressure on farm looter Dr Nyatsuro in Nottingham with another protest outside his clinic on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February and on the following day we will submit our petition to 10 Downing Street. It calls for Dr Nyatsuro's British citizenship to be revoked.
- Thanks to those who came early to help set up: Martin Chinyanga, Kevin Gondo, Isabell Gwatidzo, Fungayi Mabhunu, Phillip J Mahlahla, Jenniffer Maritsa, Esther Munyira, Cathrine Musa, Chipso Parirenyatwa, Benjamin Simbarasi and Sharon Zimuto. Thanks to Cathrine and Esther for looking after the front table and to Chipso and Isabell for running the lucky dip.

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:** 35 signed the register.

## **EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

- **ROHR Reading branch community outreach and general meeting.** Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> February. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA see below for

directions)

. For further enquiries contact: Deborah Harry 07578894896, Charles Mararirakwenda 07964731721, Joshua Kahari 07877246251, Shyline 07827493930.

· **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/>

[w.rohrzimbabwe.org/](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 20<sup>th</sup> February from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see above. From the Vigil it's about a 10 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 20<sup>th</sup> February from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

· **Nottingham demonstration against racist Zimbabwean doctor**. Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February from 12 noon – 3 pm. Venue: outside The Willows Medical Centre, Church Street, Carlton, Nottingham NG4 1RJ.

· **Submission of petition on Dr Nyatsuro to 10 Downing Street**. Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February. Arrangements to be advised.

- **ROHR National Executive meeting.** Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March from 11 am to 1.30 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see above
  
- **Protest to mark anniversary of the disappearance of Itai Dzamara.** Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March from 2 – 6 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. The protest is to mark one year 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>