

Comrade Mnangagwa's Mayday message to the workers was predictable: everything is going to be better. We know you are being exploited by businessmen's greedy price rises but we demand that employers raise your pay.

The message went down like a bond note or an RTGS dollar. It was like just another fatuous promise in the Herald that we are on course to be a middle-income country by 2030 (instead of one of the poorest in the world with one of the highest inflation rates).

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions' president Peter Mutasa said Workers' Day had been dampened by the spectre of food insecurity and serious financial challenges. All hopes after the removal of Mugabe that things would improve had been dashed. 'A majority of school children are going to be sent away from school for failure to pay fees,' Mutasa said. 'A lot of workers are dying at their homes because they cannot afford medical care because they earn useless RTGS dollars.'

(See: [https://](https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/05/we-face-a-bleak-year-zctu/)

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The fear in the government of street protests driven by abject poverty was betrayed by an hysterical claim by the Home Affairs Minister Cain Mathema. 'It is disturbing to note that the ZRP and other security services have gathered intelligence to the effect that a group of foreign nationals want to facilitate a three-day civic organisation workshop in Bulawayo in May 2019. The main agenda of the workshop is to mobilise and capacitate civic organisations and individuals to stage purported effective demonstrations and disturbances to overthrow the Zanu-PF Government,' he said. (See: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-161534.html>).

We can all rest comfortable in our beds knowing that the security services know about a routine workshop being planned in Bulawayo. Well done for being so observant

The Vigil had our own observer in Zimbabwe for the past month – Ephraim Tapa, one the founders of the Vigil in 2002, head of our sister organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) and earlier one of the founders of the MDC in his role as head of the civil service union.

Ephraim was dispirited by his latest visit. Basically, ordinary people are 'just trying to get on with their lives' – too scared to protest because of the vicious behaviour of the security forces in the January 'shutdown' campaign following the post election shootings last August. Civil society has also lost its voice as a result with many human rights activists fleeing to South Africa.

Ephraim said he was further disturbed by reports of division in the MDC and electoral malpractices around its congresses. He said the MDC would fast lose its moral high ground if its leadership did nothing to ensure clean, violence-free elections and adhere to the party constitution. Chamisa's policies, particularly around his collaboration with the G40 Zanu PF faction and hailing of Robert Mugabe as a 'great leader,' were divisive and needless.

He concluded that much of the press coverage in Zimbabwe is unreliable and civil organisations are impotent. People seem to have given up politics as a way forward and appear to be desperately looking for a way beyond the current two-party politics of Zimbabwe.

### Other points

- We were joined today by Chrispen Chamburuka, the newly elected Chair of the MDC UK and Ireland, and some of his team. There was agreement that the Vigil and the MDC should work together in the UK. The Vigil is often visited by journalists and our attention has been brought to an article which appeared in an online media site SW Londoner a few months ago (see: <http://www.swlondoner.co.uk/zimbabwe-protestors-strand/>). Among the people interviewed was one of our co-ordinators Rose Benton. She says she wants to make it clear that she has no intention of ending her association with the Vigil. But she is due to have an operation on her shoulder in September and will have to ease up on her commitment.
- We were joined by some Algerians today bringing a large Algerian flag. Solidarity photos were taken with both the flags of Zimbabwe and Algeria featuring.
- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the front table and put up the banners: Pamela Chirimuta, Miriam Gasho, Deborah Harry, Josephine Jombe, Jonathan Kariwo, Mary Muteyerwa, Ephraim Tapa and Reuben Waretza. Thanks to Josephine and Miriam for looking after the front table, to Bianca Mpawaenda, Rosemary Maponga and Bigboy Sibanda for handing out flyers, to Jonathan, Reuben and Deborah for photos and to Mary for drumming.
- 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:** 27 signed the register.

**EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May from 11.30 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Road SE1 8XX.
  - **ROHR Reading branch outreach and general meeting.** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May. Community outreach from 11.30 am – 1.30pm. Venue: Broad Street, Reading. Awareness campaign on deteriorating human rights in Zimbabwe. General meeting from 2 -5 pm: Venue: The RISC 35-39 London Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4PS. Contact: Nicodimus 07877386792, Josephine 07455166668, Shyllette 07828929806, Josh 07877246251.
  - **ROHR Fundraising supper.** Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June. 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/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>