

'Nation embraces Zim dollar . . . Country has returned to normalcy, President says'. This was a headline in the Chronicle. Sadly there is an element of truth in this. What we face is indeed 'normalcy' under Zanu PF.

MDC Vice President Tendai Biti was finance minister during the four years of the abnormal Government of National Unity when the economy was turned around. He says: 'Zimbabwe is in crisis. But to expect the ruling ZANU PF government to resolve this is improbable at best. It is, more likely, impossible.

'Today nearly four out of every five Zimbabweans just about survives in absolute poverty. On average, Zimbabweans are poorer now than they were at independence in 1980. Informal employment is at 95%, which is why the civil service has more than doubled over the last ten years to 600,000 employees – this is the only place the government can create jobs.

'Whole communities today live on less than 35 cents per person per day. In practice, this pays for a small dollop of maize, four leaves of vegetables, and a cap of cooking fat. We have a term for this, *Tsaona*, which means living by "accident". But the crisis Zimbabwe faces is no accident. This is a man-made calamity. Over the last 39 years of independence, ZANU PF has presided over the disintegration of the productive sector of the economy. Driven by sheer incompetence, greed, and the need for regime survival, the party has completely destroyed a once thriving economy.'

Biti said industries closed and infrastructure was not maintained. 'Thirdly, the backbone of Zimbabwe's economy was ripped out when the farming sector was politically redistributed through ill-planned and badly-executed land reform exercises, aimed not at the empowerment of citizens but the enrichment of elites. Fourthly, to paper over these deep problems and continue to make profits for the elites, monetary policy became a tool for further enrichment, resulting in Zimbabwe's inflation reaching 500 billion percent.

'In today's Zimbabwe, the elites prosper, in spite of the misery, and because of mal-governance. They use their preferential access to dollars to arbitrage against other local, artificial digital currencies. Furthermore, they have created cartels that are able to entirely control the import and distribution of fuel coming into the country. Meanwhile, the military and other favoured clients are offered mining concessions that are then parcelled out opaquely to friends, local and

foreign. Finally, the government's agricultural scheme, appropriately named "command agriculture", amounts to a \$4 billion private piggy bank used to finance everything from private vehicles to dowries. ZANU PF cannot realistically be expected to reform a system that it not only profits from but on which its rule depends.'

Biti said the MDC is ready to play a part in Zimbabwe's recovery and those interested in the plight of the Zimbabwean people should urge the government to the negotiating table. He said: 'A failure to do so will be measured in a loss of hope and a grave humanitarian crisis which can only be met by increased state repression.'

(See: <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zanu-pf-needs-the-opposition-to-fix-the-zimbabwes-crisis/>

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Other points

- President Mnangagwa says he is to appoint a commission of inquiry to examine allegations by Zanu PF's youth wing of corruption by senior party members, including ministers. The Vigil expects the usual cover up.

- The government has refused to uphold the rule of law in the case of the illegal seizure by police twelve years ago of a farm in the Bubi district of Matabeleland North in spite of a court order. The deadlock has blocked an initiative supported by the local community to develop a conservancy aimed at encouraging tourism.

- Things are getting so bad that the lucky few who have jobs are opting to stay overnight at their work places to save the cost of going home. The Vigil has seen a letter to the board chair of the POSB Bank in Harare about the situation (see: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10157228543753704&set=a.10150307778113704&type=3&theater>

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- After the Vigil activists attended a fundraising dinner for our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe. See the pictures on Flickr.

- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the front table today and put up the banners: Gertrude Mudede, Tsitsi Nyirongo, Hazvinei Sali, Ephraim Tapa and Bridget Zhakata. Thanks to Tsitsi and Bridget for looking after the front table, to Hazvinei, Beulah Gore, Marvellous Chinguwa and Bianca Mpawaenda for handing out flyers, to Mary, Fungisai Mupandira and Gertrude for drumming, to Isabell Gwatidzo for selling raffle tickets for ROHR fundraising and to Bianca for photos.

- 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: 24 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 6th July from 11.30 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Road SE1 8XX. Contact: Ephraim Tapa 07940793090, Patricia Masamba 07708116625.

- **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/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>