

## From tragedy to farce – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 30th May 2020

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 31 May 2020 17:04 - Last Updated Sunday, 31 May 2020 17:04

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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/49956634397/sizes/m/>

Foreign Minister Moyo says the abduction of MDC activists was 'stage managed'. If so this drama must have been directed by Zanu PF – only they could turn a tragedy into a farce.

Three young women arrested after attending a peaceful demonstration in Harare and then mysteriously driven through the night to Bindura to be tortured and sexually abused in holes in the ground: that's tragic.

A few days later the traumatised trio are charged with breaking lockdown regulations and demonstrating against hunger at a bizarre court hearing held at their hospital bedside surrounded by security agents: that's farce.

Only totally formulaic Zanu PF could come up with such a predictable circus. Only Zanu PF could scrape the barrel for such a variety of unlikely excuses to obscure the obvious: that state agents were to blame – as they have been for countless victims before and after the Vigil's friend Itai Dazmara was abducted five years ago.

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The first Zanu PF excuse was the story that the victims were in fact prostitutes and were beaten up when they asked to be paid in foreign currency. Ten out of ten for imagination, but perhaps a little too theatrical?

Then there was the claim that they had beaten themselves up (or asked their husbands or party comrades to do it). No marks for this one: too melodramatic, as the hospital doctors stitching them together could attest.

Former Mugabe fan, British citizen now government information flunkey, Nick Mangwana offered a different script: it was all the work of Mugabe followers. Who knows – perhaps Grace herself? Well, the show needs a proper villain surely?

No? Perhaps you prefer General Moyo's scenario: a piece of stage-managed theatre organised by a 'third force' was responsible designed to soil the image of the government. This sounds a reliable standby. Maybe Joshua Nkomo's lot or Rhodesian Front relics or Blair's mob? We all know they are lurking somewhere ready to grab the limelight when our defences are down.

But of course the buck stops with impresario Mnangagwa, who dismissed the incident as 'cheap atrocity propaganda' unworthy of the stage. He was supported by former all-weather actor and now stand-in Zanu PF spokesman Patrick Chinamasa, who complained that the three women were refusing to co-operate with the police.

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The onus was on them to prove they were abducted, Chinamasa declared. Beating his chest, he declaimed 'We find it abhorrent that to date neither the three lady complainants nor their family members or their friends have made a formal report to the police, suggesting that they don't want the truth to come out'

An MDC spokesperson Gladys Hlatshwayo dismissed Zanu PF statements on the abductions: 'The three were abducted at a police station by people who purported to be police officers. How can one even be able to talk to the same people who abducted her and put them through such a situation? How can the police investigate themselves? This is why we are calling for an independent investigation into the abductions,' she said

Ms Hlatshwayo suggested the situation had moved from farce to fiasco: 'The police have failed to investigate the August 1, 2018 shooting where seven people were shot dead in broad daylight by armed soldiers. Even after a commission led by (former) South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, they have failed to arrest just one person for the killings; 49 abductions since January 2019, not a single arrest.' (See: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/05/mdc-a-activists-charged-at-hospital-hearing/>.)

### Other points

- Because of the coronavirus we can no longer physically meet outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London, so we have a virtual Vigil while the lockdown continues. We ask our activists to put on Vigil / ROHR / Zimbabwe regalia and take a photo of themselves holding an appropriate poster reflecting our protest against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The photos are uploaded on our Flickr site (see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/albums/72157714525735123> ). Our virtual Vigil activists today were Deborah Harry, Shylette Chipangura, Esther Munyira and Molly Ngavaimbe who all

kindly contributed to Vigil funds.

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

### NOTICES:

- **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/zimbabwевigil>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

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