

All signs bad – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 25th July 2020

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 26 July 2020 15:55 - Last Updated Sunday, 26 July 2020 15:55

The arrest of prominent journalist Hopewell Chin'ono and the political leader Jacob Ngarivhume has received wide international coverage, exposing the desperation of the Mnangagwa regime as Zimbabwe faces collapse.

They were taken into custody on Monday but only appeared in court on Friday, when they were accused of incitement to public violence for supporting proposed demonstrations against corruption and poverty planned for 31 July. Both men were denied bail pending trial next month.

Observers noted the irony that most violence at opposition protests has been meted out by the police or army not the demonstrators.

Human rights lawyer Doug Coltart, who is representing Chin'ono, said: 'We disagree with the magistrate's ruling and his findings. He did not engage in particular with the evidence laid before him by the investigating officer who admitted there was nothing in the tweets that formed the basis of the charge to incite violence. We will be appealing against the ruling.' (See: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/24/zimbabwean-journalist-calls-for-fight-against-corruption-to-continue> .)

Before being taken back to prison Chin'ono, who had written articles exposing corruption, said: '

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Basically, this means journalism has been criminalised. The struggle against corruption should continue. People should not stop, they should carry on.'

Amnesty International agreed, saying the arrests were 'designed to intimidate and send a chilling message to journalists, whistleblowers and activists who draw attention to matters of public interest in Zimbabwe'.

The United Nations also expressed concern that the coronavirus pandemic was being used as a pretext to clampdown on fundamental human rights. It said: 'Merely calling for a peaceful protest or participating in a peaceful protest are an exercise of recognised human rights.'

Following the arrest of the two men, a number of other human rights activists have gone into hiding, including Job Sikhala, Deputy National Chair of the MDC Alliance. He said his family were under 24-hour surveillance by security agents (see: <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/main/zimbabwe-protest-organisers-goes-into-hiding/>).

Despite everything, the government maintains that the economy will soon improve. However, according to Fitch's economic research agency, Zimbabwe is the riskiest country in the southern African region (see: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-189322.html>).

Other Points:

- We were very sorry to hear that ROHR Co-ordinator Jonathan Kariwoh's mother had passed away. Our condolences to Jonathan at this time, made more difficult because it is so hard for families to grieve together during the pandemic.

- 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.

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

Events and Notices:

- **ROHR's Fundraising Walk for Freedom.** Saturday 29th August . A 20 mile walk starting at Redbridge Station at 9 am and finishing at the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. For more information, contact: Esther Munyira 07492058107, Rangarirai Chivaviro 07378429599 and Benjamin Molife 07490909900.

- **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:**

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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>