

## Interesting times – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 5th March 2016

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 06 March 2016 15:39 - Last Updated Sunday, 06 March 2016 15:39

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There is apparently an old Chinese warning against living in ‘interesting times’ . . . interesting meaning dangerous, troubled, violent, precarious, unstable etc: In brief, all the ‘interesting’ conditions that now prevail in Zimbabwe.

So hard luck to us after a week which saw the unveiling of Joice Mujuru’s People First Party and the suspension from Zanu PF of War Veterans’ Minister Mutsvangwa. Both events were overshadowed by the government’s chaotic seizure of the Chiadzwa diamond mines owned by Mugabe’s pals.

‘We wuz robbed,’ claimed Mugabe. ‘Where has all the money gone?’ feigning not to have noticed the diamonds on the soles of the feet of his well-shod wife and well-heeled cronies and all-weather friends.

Chief friend Comrade China says it is offended and hopes it’s all been a mistake. ‘We hope that the Zimbabwean side would earnestly safeguard the legitimate rights of the Chinese companies and employees, according to the local laws and the ‘Agreement on the encouragement and reciprocal protection of investments between China and Zimbabwe,’ Chinese ambassador to Zimbabwe Huang Ping said. Laws? Agreement? It appears the Chinese were born yesterday. But anyway it must mean farewell to the long-promised ‘mega deals’ which we were told would usher in the promised land (see: <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/china-warns-zim-over-mine-grabs-dailynews-live/> ).

Zimbabwe is floundering with little sign of meaningful reform and sustainable, broad-based recovery says the International Crisis Group. 'Upbeat economic projections by international institutions are predicated on government rhetoric about new policy commitments and belief in the country's potential, but there are growing doubts that ZANU PF can "walk the talk" of reform. Conditions are likely to deteriorate further due to insolvency, drought and growing food insecurity,' it says (see: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/b118-zimbabwe-stranded-in-stasis.aspx>).

One a cold rainy day, the Vigil welcomed human rights activist Ben Freeth on a brief visit to the UK. He went on to speak at the Zimbabwe Action Forum held after the Vigil and was encouraging about our work.

He said the situation at home was dreadful and remarked that he recently went back to see his stolen farm and found there were no crops, the irrigation system had been destroyed and his former workers were unemployed and impoverished. He warned that Zanu PF would be looking to control people by exploiting British and American food aid for party-political purposes. 'The British tax payer will be paying to keep Mugabe in power'.

Ben said he was skeptical about the sudden conversion to enlightened democrat of die-hard Zanu PF thieving functionary Joice Mujuru. He recalled how she and her murdered husband General Solomon Mujuru had deceived and stolen their farm from its previous owner who had been forced to flee the country with only one suitcase.

He was critical of the European diplomats living in what he called the 'Harare bubble' and said how difficult it was to get any of them to go out and see things for themselves. He said he will join the prayers in Africa Unity Square on the anniversary of the murder of the Vigil's friend Itai Dzamara who was abducted by military intelligence in Harare on 9<sup>th</sup> March last year.

The Vigil will mark the anniversary next Saturday when we will be joined by MDC UK Youth. Ben's comments about the diplomatic community prompted us to recall that the French Ambassador in Harare Laurent Delahousse was recently reprimanded by Foreign Affairs Minister Mumbengegwi about his confrontational approach over Dzamara. Mr Delahousse said afterwards he was changing his 'strategy'. Presumably this means instead of joining the mourners in Africa Unity Square he will be diplomatically licking boots in State House (see: <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2016/02/dzamara-france-says-changing-tack/> .)

### Other points

· Play: 'After Independence'. 4<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> May at the Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL. The play is by May Sumbwanyambe and tackles the issues of independence and government in Zimbabwe. More information is available here: <http://www.arcolatheatre.com/event/after-independence/2016-05-04/>

The producer has contacted the Vigil for our input and plans to visit us in April to discuss this.

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· We note that 'useful idiot' Matthew Parris, the columnist and former Conservative MP, has written another love letter to Mugabe in the UK Times. Like his predecessors, such as Stalin's admirer George Bernard Shaw, he didn't look at the terror and says of his trip 'I have never felt safer or more welcome'. We await his gushing travel article which will no doubt follow covering his expenses.

· Thanks to those who arrived early to help set up: Tafadzwa Buka, Nelson Dauramanzi, Isabell Gwatidzo, Etines Kapiya, Vimbayi Karumbidza, Maxwell Kudita, Fungayi Mabhunu, Anna Mafunga, Phillip Mahlahla, Innocent Maya, Eletha Mpofo, Roseline Mukucha, Marlon Nyamakanga, Chipo Parirenyatwa, Newman Lee Richard, Michael Sirewu, Portiah Tobaiwa and Elector Zvorwadza. Thanks to Roseline and Vimbayi for looking after the front table, to Chipo and Isabell for taking care of the lucky dip and to Rashiwe, Mavis and Vimbayi for selling the delicious food cooked by Fungayi. The food and lucky dip provided by the Central London branch raised useful money for ROHR. Thanks also to Philip Mahlahla who led the team (Nelson, Maxwell, Innocent, Marlon, Newman and Michael) which put up the high banners and tarpaulin.

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:** 48 signed the register.

## EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Discussion: 'Corruption in Zimbabwe'**. Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March. Venue: Impact Hub King's Cross - 34b York Way London N1 9AB from 6 – 8 pm. The speaker is Mary-Jane Ncube, Executive Director Transparency International Zimbabwe. The event is free. For more information and tickets:  
<http://www.transparency.org.uk/events/fighting-corruption-in-zimbabwe/>
- **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. We will be joined by MDC UK Youth.
- **ROHR Central London branch meeting**. Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March from 12 noon – 2 pm. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL. Contact: Fungayi Mabhunu 07907089899, Esther Nyambi 07446210391, Mavis Chisvo 07944612944.
- **ROHR Leicester street campaign and branch meeting**. Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March. Street campaign from 1-2 pm at Narborough Road. Meeting from 2-4 pm at the Salvation Army, Kildare Street, Leicester LE1 3FY. Directions: Opposite Peking Chinese Restaurant, City Centre. Contact: Enniah Dube 07403439707, Yvonne Makombe 07453909247 and Moline Nyabonda 07961250525.
- **ROHR Reading branch community outreach and general meeting**. Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March. Community outreach from 12 noon – 1.30 pm  
: Venue: Broad Street. Awareness campaign on deteriorating human rights in Zimbabwe. General meeting from 2 – 5 pm:  
Venue: RISC 35-39 London Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4PS. For further enquiries contact: Nicodimus Muganhu 07877386792, Charles Mararirakwenda 07964731721, Joshua Kahari 07877246251, Shyllette Chipangura 07828929806.
- **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

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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

[w.rohrzimbabwe.org/](http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/)

[http://www](http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/)

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.
  
- **ROHR National Executive meeting.** Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April from 11 am to 1.30 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. For directions see below.
  
- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April from 6.15 pm. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. 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.
  
- **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:**

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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>