

As we begin a new year it is difficult to imagine that it will be a happy one in Zimbabwe. Even optimists will find it hard to see anything but a stony road ahead.

We at the Vigil in the depths of a British winter are further chilled by the bleak analysis of Prince Mashele, executive director of the Centre for Politics and Research in South Africa ( <http://www.biznews.com/africa/2016/12/22/south-africa-will-finally-be-an-african-country/> ).

He argues that 'Western' values of accountability, political morality, reason and so on are not African and that it is idle to hope that Africans will have democracies of the type existing in Europe.

He says: 'People must not entertain the illusion that a day is coming when SA will look like the US. Our future is more on the side of Zimbabwe, where one ruler is more powerful than the rest of the population.' He goes on: 'How else are we to explain the thousands of people who flock to stadiums to clap hands for a president who has violated their country's constitution? . . . In a typical African country people have no illusion about the unity of morality and governance. People know that those who have power have it for themselves and their friends and families.'

The Zimbabwean writer Pettinah Gappah, speaking about a recent visit home, told BBC listeners that, despite the hardships there, she came across many Mugabe supporters. Prince Mashele would sardonically have called them 'true Africans'.

As we embark on 2017, we at the Vigil cling to the hope that Mashele is too pessimistic and that, having gone through so much suffering, Zimbabweans, given the chance, will find the road to freedom. Speaking at the Vigil, Ephraim Tapa said that free and fair elections were the key. Then the Vigil could shut up shop and we could all go home and rebuild our country into something that is not 'typical' and will surprise Mashele. After all, many in the diaspora have learnt something from living in free and democratic countries.

So this new year we wish you all well but with a heavy heart. Even if Mashele is wrong there are many stones on the road.

### Other points

- With government workers still waiting to be paid for December we are getting desperate messages from our families. One of our supporters reports that he tried to send money to his mother by ecocash but they had no cash and could not pay out. He said the family had no Christmas celebration and stayed indoors except for going to church. Dealers on the black market were taking 15% commission. At the moment the only reliable way to send money is through international money companies such as Western Union.

- Recent efforts to disrupt the Vigil and our sister organisation, the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe, has been causing confusion. Please note that a bogus meeting purporting to launch a so-called ROHR Central London branch on 7<sup>th</sup> January is being advertised on social media. ROHR Central London branch already exists and if you are interested in joining, ask at the Vigil. For further clarification, check:

<http://zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/839-restoration-of-human-rights-in-zimbabwe-important-message>

- Thanks to Vigil supporter Rumbi Sambana who brought toys and children's books for our Vigil children. They will be available for those who want them next Saturday (7<sup>th</sup> January).

- Thanks to those who arrived early to help set up: Elizabeth Chakachaka, Fungayi Mabhunu, Phillip Mahlahla, Rosemary Maponga, Roseline Mukucha, Alfredy Mukuvare, Patience Muyeye, Nontokozo Ncube, Rumbidzayi Sambana, Maxmus Savanhu and Ephraim Tapa. Thanks to Roseline, Rosemary, Cathrine Musa and Daisy Fabian for looking after the front table, to Rumbidzayi, Nontokozo and Patience for handing out flyers and selling wristbands, to Phillip, Alfredy and Maxmus for putting up the banners and tarpaulin and to Ephraim for bringing all the Vigil paraphernalia.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website. The facebook page for our sister organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) (

<https://www.facebook.com/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights-301811392835>

) has been hijacked by destructive elements from a group calling itself ZHRO. Please be advised that any postings on this page are not posted by ROHR.

**FOR THE RECORD:** 21 signed the register.

### EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR National Executive meeting.** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January from 11.30 am. Venue: Strand

Written by Administrator

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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. It's next door to a newsagent and the entrance is marked by a sign at street level. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organisation based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organisation 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/>

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

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

- **Monthly Itai Dzamara protest** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January from 2 – 6 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy. The protest is to mark twenty-two months since Itai's abduction by intelligence agents.

- **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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