

The Vigil is calling on the British government to insist that President Mnangagwa accepts independent observers to ensure the fairness of the elections he said would go ahead next year.

To maintain his grip on power, Mugabe only allowed access to observers from countries he regarded as allies. The result was that repeated elections were stolen with barely a squeak from observers.

The Vigil was surprised that Mnangagwa didn't delay the elections because, under present conditions, it would be a major challenge to hold free and fair elections by the deadline of next August.

All the opposition parties have insisted that there must be a new voters' roll and that the partisan election commission must be replaced. They also want the diaspora – comprising up to a quarter of the population – to be allowed to vote. This was provided for in the four-year-old constitution which has still not been fully implemented.

All this could conceivably be done if there was a serious will to do so. But this, unsurprisingly, appears completely lacking. At his inauguration, Mnangagwa made clear he has other priorities, offering some bland words about reforms to encourage investment. Indeed, after one speech he was heard to observe in Shona 'the dogs may keep on barking but Zanu PF will keep on ruling'.

For real change we have launched the following petition:

Petition to UK Africa Minister Rory Stewart

Zimbabwean exiles and supporters welcome your visit to Zimbabwe and believe the UK has much to contribute to the country.

The euphoria over the removal of the Mugabes has given way to realisation that nothing else has changed. The new leader Emmerson Mnangagwa spoke of democracy but also made clear his overriding allegiance to Zanu PF, which has repeatedly shown it does not believe in democracy.

We urge you to insist on free and fair elections in Zimbabwe to determine the will of the people before the UK offers support to Mnangagwa. In particular, we stress the importance of the following:

- 1. New voters' roll and an independent election commission*
- 2. Diaspora vote*
- 3. Participation of Western election observers*
- 4. Opposition access to state radio and television*
- 5. Police reform and the disbanding of the Central Intelligence Organisation*

Other Points

- The Vigil met from before 11 am until 6 pm on the coldest day of the year so far.

We were glad to be joined by human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell who has for long been a strong supporter of our campaign.

Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu, Ephraim Tapa and Rose Benton for setting up the Vigil and to Rumbidzayi Sambana and Netsayi Makarichi for looking after the front table throughout. It was our third gathering outside the Embassy this week. After our massive Vigil last week, activists gathered again outside the Embassy on Tuesday when Mugabe resigned. The Vigil returned to the Embassy on Wednesday from 8 am to past 6 pm when we made it clear that our protests would continue until there is democracy in Zimbabwe. We were entertained to see the graffiti

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 26 November 2017 20:30 - Last Updated Sunday, 26 November 2017 20:30

scrawled on the Embassy windows. Some activists went into the Embassy and saw that Mugabe's portrait had already been taken down. Vigil Co-ordinator Fungayi Mabhunu collared Conservative MP Ian Duncan Smith as he passed by the Embassy. He asked him to tell the Prime Minister to insist on the proper conditions for democracy before handing over any money to Mnangagwa. Thanks to the valiant people who were there all day: Fungayi Mabhunu, Netsayi Makarichi and Nyarai Masvosva.

- We noticed that 'No to retribution' was one of the most prominent messages displayed at Mnangagwa's public meetings. Presumably that accounts for the massive bribe to Mugabe to stand down, including immunity from prosecution for himself and Grace, millions of dollars, big pensions with official cars and staff and all medical bills, including for treatment in Singapore, paid for by the State. 'No to retribution' certainly doesn't apply to G40 ministers whose homes have been ransacked by soldiers. Former Finance Minister Chombo was beaten up by soldiers and is in hospital. Jonathan Moyo was rather luckier, managing to escape to South Africa while his house was trashed twice by soldiers.

- As one of our activists observed, the biggest landowners in Zimbabwe have handed over power to the country's richest man who has, in turn, rewarded them handsomely.

- Daily Mail journalist Jake Wallis Simons has been reporting from Zimbabwe, where he interviewed the Rankin family chased off their farm by Dr Nyatsuro, a British citizen, who has practiced medicine in the UK for many years. His NHS practice in Nottingham was closed down following a Vigil picketing campaign. For the article see: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5113481/White-farmer-tobacco-plantation-seized-Mugabe-thugs.html>

Jake sent us a touching video from the Rankins thanking the Vigil for our support, see:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/26878361779/in/album-72157687753152112/>

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: 42 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 9th December from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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- **MDC-T UK and Ireland Christmas party.** Saturday 9th December from 2.30 – 11.30 pm. Venue: Redbridge Town Hall, 128-142 High Street, Ilford IG1 1DD. All Zimvigil activists are invited.

- **ROHR Central London branch meeting.** Saturday 16th December from 11.30 am – 1.30 pm. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. Contact: Daisy Fabian 07708653640, Maxmus Savanhu 07397809056, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013.

- **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 over the past 15 years 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 for £10. All proceeds will go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available on Amazon.

- **Zimbabwe Action Forum** 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 2016** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/843-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2016>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2016 Highlights page.

- **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>