

MDC Deputy National Chair Tendai Biti says President Ramaphosa has a key role to play in resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe. And he warned: 'If Zimbabwe implodes South Africa will suffer'.

Biti was speaking at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London at the launch of a book, *Democracy Works: Rewiring Politics to Africa's Advantage*, to which he contributed. He said Ramaphosa was in the same position as President Mbeki a decade ago when he helped put in place the Government of National Unity in which Biti served as Finance Minister. Ramaphosa must get talks going between President Mnangagwa and MDC leader Nelson Chamisa – and London, Washington and Brussels must help ensure a 'soft landing'.

Biti, sitting next to another contributor to the book, former president Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, said a very cynical landscape was developing in Southern Africa about elections in the light of what he called the prevailing power-retention agenda. The situation had been worsened by the military coup which brought Mnangagwa to power. There had been an expectation of genuine change but the opportunity for a transitional government had been missed and most people now believed that the situation was even worse than under Mugabe.

He described as 'disastrous' a recent IMF report on Zimbabwe which – as he put it – 'painted lipstick on a crocodile'. In reality, conditions were now so bad that it was a daily struggle to survive. He spoke of state capture and said it was essential that cartels exploiting the situation were broken up. Biti added a warning to both Ramaphosa and Mnangagwa: the military coup that toppled Mugabe was now 'copybook' for the whole region.

The UK government has assured the Vigil that it will only support the readmission of Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth if it complies with the values and principles set out in the Commonwealth Charter. 'We have been clear that the disproportionate use of force by security forces, as seen in January 2019, is inconsistent with the Commonwealth Charter' it said in a letter from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (see: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/1017-letter-to-the-vigil-from-foreign-office-may-2019>).

The letter was in response to a Vigil petition which also demanded that the Zimbabwe government acknowledges the Gukurahundi genocide. The Foreign Office letter says 'We welcomed President Mnangagwa's signing of the National Peace and Reconciliation Bill in

2018. However, this needs to be enacted and form part of a more comprehensive plan of credible national dialogue and healing for Zimbabwe. The UK stands ready in friendship to support a Zimbabwe that fully embraces the rule of law, human rights and economic reform. We have been clear that international support will be based on genuine political and economic reforms.'

The Vigil petition reads: ***Zimbabwe must reform: Zimbabwe wants to rejoin the Commonwealth. Although Mugabe has gone, his fascist Zanu PF party with the backing of the military remains firmly in power. Zimbabweans in exile urge the UK not to support readmission to the Commonwealth until the regime reforms and acknowledges the genocide of some 20,000 Ndebeles by the Zanu PF regime in the 1980s.***

Other points

- Vigil activists were startled at the sight of hundreds of nude cyclists riding along the Strand. They were part of an annual global protest against oil dependency and car culture and to highlight the vulnerability of cyclists.

- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the front table today and put up the banners: Marvellous Chinguwa, Pamela Chirimuta, Beulah Gore, Patrick Hale, Josephine Jombe, Jonathan Kariwo, Tatenda Mandiki, Dambudzo Marimira, Patricia Masamba, Joyce Mbairatsunga, Margaret Munenge, Richard Munyama, Mary Muteyerwa, Evangelista Ndlovu, Casper Nyamakura, Hazvinei Saili, Sinkiwe Sigola, Ephraim Tapa and Bridget Zhakata. Thanks to Josephine for looking after the front table, to Hazvinei and Marvellous for handing out flyers, to Mary and Margaret for drumming and to Casper, Jonathan and Patricia for photos.

- 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: 24 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR Reading branch outreach and general meeting.** Saturday 22nd June. Community outreach from 11.30 am – 1.30 pm. Venue: Broad Street, Reading. Awareness campaign on deteriorating human rights in Zimbabwe. General meeting from 2 – 5 pm: Venue: The RISC 35-39 London Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4PS. Contact: Nicodimus 07877386792, Josephine 07455166668, Shyllette 07828929806, Josh 07877246251.

- **ROHR fundraising dinner.** Saturday 29th June from 6 pm till late. Venue: Zazas, 108 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1JE. Contact: Esther Munyira 07492058109, Fungisai Mupandira 07468504393, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013, Patricia Masamba 07708116625, Simbarashe Jingo 07787870888, Pamela Chirimuta 07762737339, Sikhumbuzule Sibanda 07912210225, and Farai Muroiwa 07365431776.

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 6th July from 11.30 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Road SE1 8XX. Contact: Ephraim Tapa 07940793090, Patricia Masamba 07708116625.

- **ROHR sponsored walk.** Saturday 27th July. Contact: Esther Munyira 07492058109, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013, Patricia Masamba and Farai Muroiwa 07365431776. More information as plans progress.

- **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/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>