

Report on the ROHR peace walk – 27th July 2019

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 01 August 2019 15:19 - Last Updated Thursday, 01 August 2019 15:19

Zimbabwe is currently under a military dictatorship since the advent of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's second republic. Since the July 2018 general election, more than 20 innocent civilians have been shot dead from behind, execution style, while fleeing soldiers. The brutal army crackdown which followed the 14 January 2019 'national shutdown' has engendered a climate of fear and ordinary citizens are now resigned to suffer in silence.

The Restoration of Human Rights (ROHR) International strongly believes that the exercise of civil liberties and political expressions should never be about coercion, dictatorship, manipulation or blatant abuse of citizens. Rather, it should be about the people's issues and fair play, transparency and accountability as underpinned by the rule of law, justice and peace.

This commitment to human rights and democracy prompted the organisation into a peace walk to help raise awareness and restore basic freedoms.

On 27 July 2019, twenty-one UK based human rights activists travelled long distances from across Britain, some as far away as Scotland and Middlesbrough, to walk for peace and human rights in Zimbabwe. By 8.30am, participants had gathered and by 9am, the peace walkers had started the 15 mile walk from Redbridge train station to Zimbabwe House, Charring Cross in London. Among the participants, were mothers with buggies and babies, and one lady was over 60 years, all for the love of their beloved Zimbabwe.

Despite the rain, participant morale remained high and the walk was punctuated by freedom songs and slogans all the way through. It was encouraging to note that the British public was very supportive in their comments and demeanour. "Keep fighting, Freedom will eventually come!" were words recorded from one of the motorists; "Zimbabwe, we hear you and it will definitely make an impact".

As we approached Victoria Park, the halfway point: the majority of the participants were tiring but with the able leadership and support of our leader, Ephraim Tapa, none gave up. Instead, all participants persevered, albeit at a slower pace, until arrival at the Strand street; where the Zimbabwe House is situated. At once, everybody felt re-energised as the walk broke into toyi-toyi. The chatting and singing became louder and the ululation rose to crescendo levels as walkers celebrated a job well done. This was a lap of victory by the participants in getting to Zimbabwe House, in defiance of all the odds staked against us. As we were being welcomed

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and congratulated by those at the Vigil some could not hide their tears of joy! The intrinsic value derived from walking to the final point in the fight for freedom would be invaluable, going forward.

Participant after participant, spoke of their determination to keep going as they felt emboldened to take the struggle for human rights to another level. At the end walkers agreed that next year's effort needs to be bigger, well planned and executed to the greatest possible impact.

Recent declarations by Deputy Minister (Defence) Victor Matemadanda of Zanu PF that "We will release soldiers who are trained to kill if you demonstrate", must be taken seriously and met with a more than equal measure of resolve, determination and self-sacrifice for the cause of human rights and people freedoms.

UK based human rights activists remain committed to bringing an end to the long suffering of the people of Zimbabwe. Truly, Zimbabwe deserves better.

All participants reached the finishing point (Zimbabwe House) with no incidents of casualties reported.

Thanks to the ROHR President, Ephraim Tapa for the vision, leadership and the support from start to finish and all those who participated!

Photos of the walk can be seen on this link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/albums/72157709861129111>

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Peace walk organiser