

ROHR Central London will be submitting a petition to 10 Downing Street on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The petition is directed to the UK Border Agency protesting at deportations to Zimbabwe as violence worsens ahead of the elections.

All members of the Vigil, ROHR and the Zimbabwean community at large are welcome - the more, the better.

We are meeting at the Vigil at 2 pm then taking the petition to Downing Street for 4.30 pm.

The petition reads:

***Petition to the UK Border Agency:*** *We, the undersigned members of the Zimbabwe Community in the United Kingdom, friends of Zimbabwe and human rights defenders, are deeply disturbed by allegations that deportees to Zimbabwe are being threatened with sedation to facilitate their forced removal from the UK. We are also concerned by the practice of detaining asylum seekers when they sign-in. We believe this approach discourages compliance and instead drives the frightened asylum seeker under the radar and possibly into crime. We also raise concern that asylum claims made in detention are being fast tracked to expedite the deportation decision without full recourse to the law. We call upon the UK immigration authorities to respect international human rights statutes in their treatment of asylum seekers throughout the asylum process. We beg the UK government to seriously consider deferring deportations to Zimbabwe to at least 6 months after the planned 2013 elections which we believe will be, like those before them, violent.*

Also on 16<sup>th</sup> March we are being joined by Action for Southern Africa (formerly the Anti-Apartheid Movement) who are marking Referendum Day. ACTSA will be inviting British trade unions and other groups. They have sent out the following message to their mailing list and will also be letting them know about our petition presentation to 10 Downing Street.

*“Zimbabwe is entering a critical period for human rights, democracy and development. On 16<sup>th</sup> March Zimbabweans will go to the polls for the first time since the violent presidential run off in 2008, to vote on the new constitution.*

***ACTSA will be joining the Zimbabwe Vigil outside Zimbabwe House to support the call for peace, human rights and free and fair elections later this year, will you join us?□***

*Given the main political parties all support a yes vote in the referendum it is unlikely to be affected by the widespread violence that occurred in the presidential election run off in 2008. There is concern however that the elections, which will take place after the referendum, possibly July, could see a return to the terrible violence and intimidation experienced and vote rigging of 2008. Do join us for an hour between 3 to 5 pm on Saturday 16 March to stand in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe for peace, human rights and democracy*

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ACTSA's message is 'Vote of Peace'. They will be bringing red pieces of paper shaped like a rose on which they will ask passers-by to write a message of hope for peaceful elections and then 'vote' by placing their rose in a clear box.

Straight after the Vigil we will be holding a forum at the Strand Continental Hotel. Mark Beacon, Campaigns Manager of ACTSA is coming and will discuss with us how the Vigil and ACTSA can work more closely together to deliver freedom in Zimbabwe. For directions check the Events and Notices section of the diary on our website.

Further ahead - on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March we will be holding our regular monthly 21<sup>st</sup> Movement Free Zimbabwe protest. The Vigil is waiting till after the Referendum on 16

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## **Vigil / ROHR activities 16/3/13**

Written by Administrator

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March before deciding on who we will target at this protest.