

Vigil Highlights 2013

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 26 January 2014 14:03 -

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2013

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Saturday 5th January 2013: The first Vigil of the New Year was auspicious if only because it didn't rain! (2012 had been the wettest year since English records began.) The Vigil diary noted that the exiled Zimbabwean writer Chenjerai Hove reflected the Vigil's view that there had been no improvement on the election situation of 2008. 'Mugabe's party has not changed its approach one inch' he said. 'As the country faints under heavy economic and political burdens, the politicians would rather punch the air with empty slogans and worthless promises that are so unrealistic that even illiterate villagers wonder how a politician can be so dumb as to promise a bridge where there is not even a river'.

Saturday 12th January: On a bitterly cold day the Vigil kept warm by laughing at the reported remarks by Finance Minister Tendai Biti at a Zimbabwe investment conference here in London. 'Reported' remarks because we couldn't afford to go to the meeting to hear for ourselves at a cost of £90 for the cheapest ticket. Biti apparently said that Zimbabwe had become 'a safe and lucrative place to come and invest in' and was 'pregnant with opportunities' . . .

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Saturday 19th January: The Vigil delivered a petition to the South African High Commission in London appealing to President Zuma to ensure that international observers were sent to Zimbabwe for the upcoming elections and calling on him to get tough with Mugabe.

Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa said the diaspora were the victims of South Africa's failure to broker peace. Ephraim and David Kadzutu of our partner organisation Zimbabwe Yes We Can attended the first of the year's bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forums held after the Vigil. They outlined the aims of the forum which they said was envisaged as an umbrella group like the Anti-apartheid Movement embracing all Zimbabweans working for freedom and democracy.

Saturday 26th January: The Vigil sent an open letter to Chatham House, the influential London international affairs think tank, protesting at not being allowed to attend a meeting to discuss a contentious book defending Mugabe's land policy 'Zimbabwe takes back its land'.

Thursday 31st January: Vigil supporters demonstrated outside Chatham House. We had consulted leading economists in Zimbabwe for their opinions on the assertions made in the book so we were able to make available to people going into the meeting the facts the authors had ignored. A friend who managed to get into the meeting noted in an email to us: 'Irony of whites on the platform largely justifying what happened after the land invasions and blacks outside protesting'.

Saturday 2nd February: One of the authors of the book, Dr Joseph Hanlon, came to a meeting of the Zimbabwe Action Forum after the Vigil to defend the book. He had a rough ride. Nobody accepted his arguments. Daizy Fabian said: 'My father was a farmer but we were taken over and lost everything and we're not white we're black!'

Saturday 9th February: Every week sees the 'credibility gap' between Harare and the outside world grow wider. This week we were told by Tendai Biti that the elections will be free and fair – despite the failure to implement any of the GPA reforms. We think Biti should ask his new friend Gideon Gono to see what his prophet pals can do. Gono obviously thinks nothing is beyond their miraculous money making powers. Or Biti could bet his last \$217 (said to be all that was left in the Treasury) on free and fair elections – the Vigil will give him a million to one.

Saturday 16th February: The Vigil met earlier than usual to support an Amnesty International protest on behalf of WOZA. The Vigil displayed a poster protesting at the brutal treatment of WOZA at their Valentine Day's demonstrations in Harare and Bulawayo. Roses were laid on the

doorstep of the Embassy.

Saturday 23rd February: On a bitterly cold day, we were surprised to be joined outside the Embassy by President Mugabe, tearing himself away from his 89th birthday celebrations. Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu who played the role of Mugabe in our mask, dozing off under the snowflakes. Vigil supporters tied him to his chair with the SADC bonds which we hope will produce free and fair elections: 'International Observers', 'Curbs on Partisan Security Forces', 'Impartial Electoral Commission', 'Reformed Voters' Roll', 'No Hate Speech' and 'Open Airways'. Vigil supporters then trooped off to the South African High Commission to deliver a letter for President Zuma warning him that unless the GPA reforms are implemented there is no hope that Mugabe will allow free and fair elections.

Saturday 2nd March: The Vigil urged the United Nations not to finance the Zimbabwean elections unless UN monitors are allowed to attend. We said in a letter to the UN Development Programme: *'The Zimbabwe Vigil understands that the Zimbabwe government has asked you to pay for the coming elections as it says it has no money. At the same time, Vice President Joice Mujuru has insisted that only observers from Southern Africa will be invited to monitor the elections. We believe that President Mugabe's Zanu PF cronies have syphoned off billions of dollars of diamond revenue and that the President could easily arrange to finance the elections. But if the UNDP is of a mind to squander donors' money on the Zimbabwean elections we believe it should be conditional on UN observers being allowed to monitor them. We suggest that the observers should be drawn from those countries such as the US and EU members which provide most of the funds.'* Mart in Chinyanga, who has launched a campaign 'Diaspora Feels It', joined us at the Zimbabwe Action Forum after the Vigil after laying flowers on the doorstep of the Embassy in memory of 12-year-old Christpower Maisiri who was murdered by Zanu PF.

Thursday 7th March: 19 Vigil supporters attended a Mike Campbell Foundation event 'Hope in a Desert' at the prestigious Royal Geographical Society. The meeting was chaired by Kate Hoey MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Zimbabwe, who paid tribute to the work of the Vigil. One of the speakers at the meeting was Dr Craig Richardson, an American associate professor of economics, who spoke of the importance of property rights for the future of the Zimbabwean economy. The executive director of the Foundation, Ben Freeth, criticized two recent books by British academics which he said were white-washing the agricultural situation.

Saturday 9th March 2013: The likelihood of election violence in Zimbabwe has prompted a petition to the British Government by Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) and

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the Vigil to protest at the deportation of Zimbabwean failed asylum seekers ahead of the elections.

Saturday 16th March: The main event of the day was the presentation of our petition to 10 Downing Street. Earlier, more than 100 Zimbabwean exiles gathered outside the Zimbabwe Embassy to mark Referendum Day. We were joined by Mark Beacon of Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), formerly the Anti-Apartheid Movement, who said a peaceful referendum was no guide to what would happen in the elections. He insisted that for the elections to be credible there would have to be an accurate voters' roll and international as well as regional observers. People were invited to write messages of hope for free and fair elections on red paper roses which were deposited in a voting box. The only sour note was cast by President Mugabe (played by Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) who, asked to vote for freedom, voted no. Fungayi later summed up the Vigil's view: 'The referendum is a charade. President Mugabe has once again outwitted the Movement for Democratic Change. Four years and more than \$100 million have been wasted on this defective constitution when what is really needed is action to ensure free and fair elections'. After the Vigil Mark Beacon joined us at a well-attended forum at which we discussed how we could work together.

Saturday 23rd March: Spring snow didn't stop us as we trailed around central London visiting various embassies to protest against the harassment of those opposing Zimbabwe's police state. Displaying posters such as 'Free Beatrice Mtetwa', 'Stop harassment of Zimbabwean human rights groups', 'End police lawlessness' and 'Restore rule of law in Zimbabwe', we first delivered a letter to the High Commission of Tanzania, the Chair of the SADC Security Troika. A copy of the letter was also left at the High Commission of South Africa, the SADC facilitator on Zimbabwe, and at the Zimbabwe Embassy.

Tuesday 26th March: Vigil activists gathered outside a meeting in London between Zimbabwe's Justice Minister Chinamasa and the international donor group Friends of Zimbabwe. The activists displayed posters such as: 'Britain don't give in to Mugabe' and 'No money unless rule of law'. Our supporters shouted 'thief' and 'murderer' when Chinamasa emerged from the talks.

Saturday 30th March: One of the Vigil founders, Patson Muzuwa, reported that he had managed to smuggle himself into the Zimbabwe Embassy for a meeting on Friday attended by the three person Zimbabwe delegation representing the GNU partners. Patson said it was clear that the delegation only wanted to meet selected members of the diaspora and people had tried to shut him up when he insisted on asking questions. When Chinamasa asked whether people

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had been ill-treated by Zanu PF, Patson dismayed everyone by standing up and saying 'Yes, I have been tortured'. Patson added that Chinamasa made racist remarks, saying Zimbabweans didn't want whites, and also made it clear that he didn't want Zimbabweans returning home.

Saturday 6th April: Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa, who has just returned from an undercover visit to Zimbabwe, says he believes the result of the referendum on a new constitution was rigged. Ephraim, a former leader of the Civil Service Employees Union, has not been home since he was given political asylum in the UK after being tortured and fleeing Zimbabwe in 2002. Ephraim said ZEC's report of an unprecedented high voter turnout was being disputed and its cooking of the figures was an indicator of things to come.

Wednesday 10th April: A Vigil delegation had a useful meeting with the Zimbabwe Desk at the UK Foreign Office. We told them that we expected rigged elections and Ephraim spoke of the tangible fear he detected in Zimbabwe. He predicted that disillusionment with the MDC would produce apathy during the elections. We were assured that the British government's only aim was to see free and fair elections resulting in a government of the people's choice. The Foreign Office expressed confidence in the facilitation of SADC.

Saturday 13th April: That prosecutors have now charged civil rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa with calling police 'cockroaches' shows an unexpected sensitivity. Mind you, the police do seem to be all over the place, scuttling away as soon as the light shines on them, only to regather in the dark. But their boss Patrick Chinamasa shows more than sensitivity. He says the UN cannot visit Zimbabwe to discuss funding the elections. To check if things are ok would, in his paranoid mind, be furthering the regime change agenda. The UN must instead just hand the money over.

Saturday 20th April: Waving a pistol at Vigil supporters, President Mugabe (played by Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) appeared outside the Zimbabwe Embassy to mark Independence Day. Carrying a poster reading '33 years in power', he was beset by Zimbabwean exiles with rival placards such as: 33 years of oppression, 33 years of looting, 33 years of lawlessness and 33 years of rigged elections. Vigil supporters signed a letter to President Zuma drawing his attention to moves underway for massive vote rigging. After the Vigil, Ephraim Tapa joined us at the bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum to talk about his time in Zimbabwe. He spoke of the daily hardships of the people living the 'economy of the stomach' and how when he visited people's carefully kept homes in Harare their faces fell when he asked to use the toilet.

Saturday 27th April: We at the Vigil were glad to hear Morgan Tsvangirai insist that reforms laid out in the GPA must be implemented before the elections. But the Vigil wants him to go further and spell out that, if the reforms are not made, he will not take part.

Saturday 4th May: The scale of the challenge facing the opposition is becoming ever clearer as Zanu PF puts into action its well-practised plan to rig the vote. Eddie Cross, the MDC-T MP, says he expects a landslide victory . The Vigil can't imagine an MDC victory with: a rigged voters' roll, obstacles to voter registration, intimidation of MDC voters, corrupt electoral commission, clampdown on civil society organisations, politicised security forces, biased judges, unreformed media, refusal to allow UN scrutiny, limits on election observers and total non-co-operation with SADC.

Saturday 11th May: The British newspaper the Guardian runs a full page on Zimbabwe by David Smith reporting from Harare. He writes: 'The Zimbabwean president will retain power in this year's elections through fair means or foul; the poll will be relatively peaceful and deemed "credible" by the west; then sanctions will be lifted against Mugabe and his inner circle, ushering him back in from the cold.' The message from the Guardian is that the coming election must be accepted however flawed. The Vigil begs to disagree. We believe that SADC should stand by the Global Political Agreement it foisted on the MDC. And if it doesn't the MDC should refuse to take part in the charade.

Saturday 18th May: South Africa must 'go to hell with their treachery and leave us alone' fulminates Zanu PF politburo member Jonathan Moyo. His tirade follows the 'outrageous' remarks by South Africa's Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim who said that the MDC parties had 'a legitimate argument' in demanding further reforms before the elections.

The Vigil sent the following letter to President Zuma:

On behalf of oppressed Zimbabweans we apologise for the insolent remarks by Zanu PF functionaries about the comments by Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim suggesting that Zanu PF should implement the GPA. We trust that South Africa will spell out to Zanu PF the consequences of a rigged election . . .

Saturday 25th May: 'We are sorry and we pass our condolences to his family' said MDC T MP for Mazowe Central Shepherd Mushonga. Who was the noble soul he was lamenting? None other than Elias Kanengoni, the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation, who

was sentenced to seven years in prison for the shooting of former Gweru mayor Patrick Kombayi but was pardoned by Mugabe. The late lamented was also named by MDC T as one of the people responsible for the massacre of 14 party activists at Chaona village in Chiweshe in May 2008.

The Vigil's exasperation with this hypocrisy were prompted by a sycophantic television documentary on the Mugabe family made for the SABC by Dali Tambo, son of South African liberation hero Oliver Tambo. 'Flowers, silver cutlery and a box of tissues adorn the spotless white tablecloth' reports the British Guardian newspaper, which was given a preview of the programme. 'Mum chortles' as the first family tucks in . . . 'You're very loving, you're kind, you're generous', she gushes to the President . . .

Saturday 1st June: The Vigil applauds Tendai Biti's promise that an MDC government will firmly support action on corruption. All public officials will be required to declare their assets every year. 'Guys I have four underwear,' he told SW Radio Africa. 'Guys I've got four vests. Guys I've got four bras – size 46B.' We would like to check next year if Mr Biti is still size 46B but, sadly, the Vigil doesn't think it's likely that the MDC will form the next government, having allowed themselves to be out-manoeuvred by Zanu PF for four years to the extent that there is no time left to ensure a level playing field for the elections that Zanu PF's tame judges say must be held by the end of next month. The Zimbabwe Action Forum, at our fortnightly meeting after the Vigil, was told by Andy Moyse of the Zimbabwe Media Monitoring Project: 'Zanu PF will control the elections as they have always done'.

Saturday 8th June: We disenfranchised Zimbabweans think that Zanu PF spokesman Gumbo can't be serious in describing President Zuma's advisor Lindiwe Zulu as 'a mad woman' for insisting on the promised reforms before elections. The Vigil hopes that Zuma will dismiss the decision of the aptly-named 'con'court to order elections by the end of next month. No doubt the 'mad woman' will have informed him of the opinion of Deputy Chief Justice Luke Malaba that the ruling 'defied logic'.

Saturday 15th June: We arrived at the Vigil generally pessimistic about the SADC summit in Maputo but before the day was out our lives faced transformation. 'Good people, good, good people, it has been an incredible and unbelievable day' Tendai Biti said on his Facebook page. 'SADC rose to the occasion and scuttled the evil and Machiavellian machinations of the chaos faction of Zanu PF.' Mr Biti said all President Zuma's recommendations were adopted, including a demand that the Constitutional Court be requested to postpone elections for 14 days to enable reforms to be made. The security forces would be required to publicly affirm their commitment to the rule of law, SADC observers were to be deployed immediately and SADC representatives were to sit in JOMIC and not merely to receive reports as demanded by Zanu PF.

Tuesday 18th June: About 20 Vigil supporters attended a meeting in London at which a new film was shown 'Beatrice Mtetwa and the rule of law'. We were happy to be introduced to Beatrice, who said the new constitution would not of itself restore the rule of law. This would require full commitment by all parties. At present the voters' roll was in a shambles and perpetrators of political violence were still at large. Even if changes were made now there was not enough time left to affect people on the ground.

Saturday 22nd June: After a brief ray of hope from the SADC Summit in Maputo, the week since then has seen prospects of free and fair elections again dimming as Zanu PF refuses to implement agreed reforms. The Vigil learns Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube were left kicking their heels at State House for three hours on Friday, waiting vainly for Mugabe to pitch up for a crucial meeting. What the Vigil would have liked to see from Tsvangirai and Ncube is a decision to present an ultimatum to Zanu PF and SADC: no reforms, no elections. The Vigil was joined by MDC members, as well as ROHR and Zimbabwe We Can supporters. Their signatures quickly filled pages of our newly-launched petition: 'Zimbabweans in the diaspora and supporters call on political parties at home not to take part in the forthcoming elections unless Zanu PF implements the reforms demanded by SADC at its summit in Maputo on 15th June 2013. We believe that, unless these reforms are made, the results of the elections will not be credible'.

Thursday 27th June: Vigil supporters took part in a demonstration outside the Embassy to mark the fifth anniversary of the abortive presidential run-off. Centrepiece of the demonstration was a stark 'tree of hope' on which were hung messages wishing for free and fair and non-violent elections written on red paper roses by people who had called at our regular Saturday Vigil. The tree was then taken to Southwark Cathedral and installed there by the Sub-Dean, Canon Bruce Saunders, who led us in prayers for peace and justice in Zimbabwe.

Saturday 29th June: Regular supporter Peter Sidindi condemned African leaders for being taken in by Mugabe's revolutionary posturing when he was exactly the opposite of a freedom fighter. Ephraim Tapa, leader of ROHR and the We Can Movement said that as from today we were without a parliament and without reforms ahead of the coming elections.

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Saturday 6th July: Someone defined stupidity as doing the same thing again and expecting a different result. The reverse could also be true: intelligence could be defined as doing the same thing and expecting the same result. On this basis the MDCs are stupid and Zanu PF intelligent. Since it's now obvious that the elections have already been thoroughly rigged and that none of the long-promised reforms will be implemented, the Vigil could challenge Tsvangirai and Ncube to honour their threats to boycott the elections. But it is clear to the Vigil that there is no chance they will do this.

Friday 12th July: A large group of ROHR activists presented a petition calling for free and fair elections to the Zimbabwe Electoral Offices in Harare and the Home Affairs Ministry.

Saturday 13th July: We were joined by Mugabe himself (in the form of Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) who showed us how to carry out the clever Israeli trick of ballot rigging. The Vigil has written to President Zuma in the hope of putting some spine into SADC. Here's our letter: '

President Mugabe has made it clear that he will not respect the requirements of the recent SADC meeting in Maputo and has continued to obstruct any attempt to implement the reforms he undertook to make under the Global Political Agreement. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that the elections on 31

st

July are already being systematically rigged.'

Thursday 18th July: The Vigil / ROHR had had a meeting with the Zimbabwe desk of the British Foreign Office and we gave them our analysis of the situation at home. Vigil founder member and President of ROHR Ephraim Tapa said our delegation was dismayed that concern seems to have shifted from 'free and fair elections' to 'credible elections'.

Saturday 20th July: A demanding Mugabe (again played by Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask) kept all of us at the Vigil hard at it stuffing ballot boxes for the elections on 31

st

July. Unusually considerate, he saved us a bit of work by marking a cross against his name before handing out the ballot papers from a seemingly inexhaustible supply. After the Vigil we gathered at the India Club for our bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum.

Ephraim talked about the rigging of the elections and said nothing could be expected from SADC, which was just a trade union of presidents.

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Saturday 27th July: With only four days to go before the elections, the Vigil 'commends' President Mugabe on his 'credible' re-election for another 5 year term as he approaches his 90th

birthday. Despite overwhelming evidence that the elections on 31st

July are being rigged, the SADC 'Summit' on 20th

July had four 'commendations' and a 'credible' in its brief four-point communique released after meeting to consider complaints by the MDC about the election arrangements.

President Mugabe (again in the form of Fungayi in our Mugabe mask) was again at the Vigil to stuff ballot boxes. He had with him two large black bags marked 'Nikuv', the Israeli company being paid millions to help the Zanu PF vote riggers.

Wednesday 31st July: As votes were cast in the Zimbabwe elections, The Vigil and supporters in London called on South Africa to organize new elections in keeping with the agreed roadmap and election guidelines of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The call came during a six hour demonstration in protest at the rigging of the vote by Mugabe's Zanu PF party. About 70 Vigil supporters were joined by members of Action for Southern Africa, the successor to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and representatives of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party. Also there was the human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell. The protest was covered by a variety of news organisations who showed particular interest in the Vigil's depiction of how Mugabe was stealing the elections. Fungayi Mabhunu (wearing our Mugabe mask) was filmed stuffing ballot boxes with votes from large black bags labeled Nikuv – the Israeli company accused of helping Zanu PF rig the elections. During the afternoon Vigil supporters moved en masse around the corner for a boisterous demonstration outside the South African High Commission, where the following letter was delivered:

'Dear President Zuma:

Zimbabwean exiles and supporters deplore the refusal of President Mugabe to ensure the elections are free and fair. There is overwhelming evidence that the poll has been comprehensively rigged and we have no confidence that the results will reflect the will of the people. The Zimbabwe Vigil calls on the Southern African Development Community to organise new elections in keeping with the agreed roadmap and SADC election guidelines.

Saturday 3rd August: After the predictable failure of the MDC in the elections, Morgan Tsvangirai must consider his position. The custom in most countries is that a losing candidate stands aside – particularly if he has lost several elections. The Vigil believes that Tsvangirai must take responsibility for a succession of decisions which have been fatal to the opposition in Zimbabwe.

Here are a few of the MDC decisions which have puzzled us, as we have clearly recorded in our diaries: 1) The mad split over the Senate, 2) Pulling out of the Presidential run-off in 2008, 3) Joining in the flawed GNU, 4) Failure to pull out of government when Mugabe immediately

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disregarded the GPA, 5) Being distracted by the ludicrous 4-year-long constitution-making exercise, which produced an abortion of a document when the MDC should have spent the time concentrating on getting a level playing field

for elections, 6) Allowing vital roadmap issues to be delayed until they were impossible to implement, 7) Agreeing to take part in the latest elections when none of the MDC or SADC requirements had been met.

Saturday 10th August 2013: There has been a call in London for a conference of the Zimbabwean diaspora to discuss the way forward following the rigged elections which have returned Mugabe to power for another term. The call came from Ephraim Tapa who said the MDC project had run its course and Zimbabweans were looking to the diaspora to come up with an alternative programme to save Zimbabwe. The Vigil was attended by 100 Zimbabweans from all parts of the UK, including members of the UK.

Saturday 17th August: Supporters of the Vigil and associated groups have agreed to arrange an all-stakeholder meeting in London in October to give the diaspora an opportunity to discuss ways of working together to reclaim Zimbabwe. The decision was made at the Zimbabwe Action Forum held after the Vigil outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London. The Forum was addressed by Dewa Mavhinga, Senior Researcher for Africa with Human Rights Watch and a former regional co-ordinator for Southern Africa of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. He was in Zimbabwe for the elections and gave us a firsthand account of how they were rigged. Mr Mavhinga, who has had meetings with the leadership of most SADC countries, said they had made it clear that, as long as the violence of 2008 was avoided, they would rubberstamp the election outcome.

Saturday 24th August: The Vigil launched our new petition calling on the UK and the European Union to follow the lead of the United States and continue sanctions. The petition, addressed to European Union governments, reads: *'Following the rigged elections in Zimbabwe, we urge the European Union to re-impose the targeted sanctions on Mugabe and his cronies. We further call on the EU to suspend government aid to all Southern African Development Community countries until they abide by their commitment to uphold human rights in Zimbabwe.'*

Ephraim Tapa said: '

Altogether the EU gives billions of dollars each year to pay for the misgovernment and corruption of Southern Africa. Why? Let them look East for aid.'

A South Korean film crew spent the afternoon with us interviewing several of us about the situation in Zimbabwe.

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Saturday 31st August: The Zimbabwean diaspora is puzzled that a month has passed since the stolen elections and a seemingly punch-drunk opposition has given no sign of a strategy to confront Mugabe, let alone stage demonstrations against Zanu PF's blatant chicanery. We at the Vigil are sorry that the MDC did not decide to boycott parliament to make a powerful statement to the world about the election rigging – especially necessary since the puzzling withdrawal of the MDC's legal challenge against the outcome. Mugabe promised that civil servants and others would be given pay rises. We urge the MDC to support the legitimate demands of workers for this promise to be honoured.

Saturday 7th September: After the Vigil many supporters went on to our bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum at which we discussed plans for an all-stakeholders' meeting of the diaspora to be held in London. It was proposed that the diaspora should be invited to coalesce around ideas such as: 1) Scrapping indigenisation and encouraging foreign direct investment, 2) Giving freehold title to farmers to enable them to get bank loans or sell their properties (economists say this would at a stroke stimulate agriculture), 3) Nationalising the diamond mines, 4) Privatising the parastatals, 5) Requiring senior elected and non-elected leaders to disclose their assets, 6) Replacing the judiciary and reforming the police and armed forces.

Saturday 14th September: A pom pom from the Vigil for NoViolet Bulawayo who has been chosen as one of the finalists for the prestigious Man Booker prize for best novel of the year written by someone from the Commonwealth (still including the Irish Republic and Zimbabwe!) NoViolet, whose book is titled 'We Need New Names', gave an interview to the UK's Guardian newspaper about a visit home in April – the first time she had been back for thirteen years. It is clear that she shares our fears as we face the consequences of another stolen election. 'It was a strange country,' Bulawayo told the Guardian. 'I went there in search of the Zimbabwe I knew and it was a shock: power cuts, water cuts, just driving down the streets the potholes were amazing, and 80% of the population not working. Just seeing the desperation, wherever you went, people were struggling. That was a picture of the country that I never knew.' For all Zanu PF's big talk, a bleak picture is painted in the latest economic report on Zimbabwe by the World Bank.

Saturday 21st September: While we sang 'Ishe Komberera Africa / Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica' outside the Embassy at the end of the Vigil, Zanu-PF supporters in the UK were attending 'official victory Celebrations' elsewhere in London. Zanu-PF supporters continue to claim asylum in the UK on the fraudulent basis of political persecution in Zimbabwe. The Vigil will continue to expose those who do this. We believe they should be sent home to pressure NoPresident Mugabe to clear up the mess there which has made it unpleasant for even Zanu-PF people to live in. The bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum agreed the planned All-Stakeholders' Conference for the Zimbabwe Diaspora would be held on Thursday 24

th

October.

Saturday 28th September: The Vigil was glad to hear from Kate Hoey MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe, that she is planning to attend our conference on the future of Zimbabwe. Kate welcomed this initiative, agreeing there was general despair at the situation following the stolen elections. We are now sending out invitations to people and groups who we think might be interested in sharing their views on how Zimbabweans can work through this despair to a better future.

Saturday 5th October: Up to a quarter of Zimbabwe's people have fled the country – among them the best educated. Reading the Herald one can see the disastrous result of this exodus. 'Elementary studies of economics inform us that production occurs in three levels which are primary, secondary and tertiary and of the late, the fourth level which is quaternary', goes one article. The writer says a 'paradigm shift' in Zimbabwe is 'the panacea that will lift our nation from the doldrums of quagmire that the economic forces of this age have relegated us to' . . . The reality is that the flight from Zimbabwe looks, if anything, like increasing as NoPresident Mugabe reneges on his election promises of pay rises, investment in industry etc and the economy moves from primary to secondary and tertiary then 'quaternary'.

Saturday 12th October: With the UN Secretary-General's congratulations on his election 'victory' ringing in his ears, NoPresident Mugabe ventured to join us at the Vigil as we marked our 11th anniversary. Played by Vigil stalwart Fungayi Mabhunu, wearing our Mugabe mask, he carried a poster reading 'Thanks UN'. Betrayed by SADC, the AU, the EU and now the UN, Zimbabweans have been abandoned to our fate. How the diaspora can help the people at home was discussed at a meeting of the Zimbabwe Action Forum after the Vigil. The forum was addressed by Ephraim Tapa, Vigil founder member, who is to chair the 'Restore Zimbabwe' All-Stakeholders' Conference which is to be held in London on 24th October.

Saturday 19th October: The Vigil's initiative in arranging a diaspora conference in London has met with predictable abuse by Zanu PF trolls prowling the internet. We think every CIO agent – when they are not out beating people up – spends his office hours in cyber disinformation in the relentless war against truth. Zanu PF's latest flatulent blueprint: Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset) is no asset as far as we can see. It says: 'Government would among other things undertake a national blitz to rehabilitate water supplies, sewerage systems, roads, health facilities and schools in all urban centres, institute measures to improve processes at the Registrar General's Office by December 2013 . . .' Fat chance!

Thursday 24th October: Kate Hoey MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe was a keynote speaker at the 'Restore Zimbabwe' conference held in London at the initiative of the Vigil. Kate deplored international acceptance of the outcome of the sham elections. She said it was up to the diaspora to create a powerful voice to make the UK government listen – particularly about sanctions when they come up for debate in the EU in February. She said the diaspora had a responsibility to let the world know what was happening in Zimbabwe and went on to describe the Vigil as 'a shining light these long years' and added 'you have been right when politicians have been wrong'. The Conference was attended by about 70 people and messages of support came from the US, South Africa, Australia and Zimbabwe.

Saturday 26th October: The Vigil is sending a note to the Home Office asking whether they rejoice in the presence in the UK London-based Bishop Climate Irungu, 'founder of World Conquerors Christian Centre', who said 'the people of Zimbabwe rejoiced in their current leadership'. We advise the Home Office to also look into Spirit Embassy founder Prophet Angel who says he's worth more than \$60 million and has interests in the United Kingdom. 'Money makes me happy and I have lots of it.' he said to thunderous applause.

Saturday 2nd November: The Zimbabwean diaspora speaking from London has rejected the 31st July elections as rigged and has demanded new elections under international supervision after promised reforms have been made. It wants the opposition in Zimbabwe to resist Mugabe at every step and challenge him on issues such as the diaspora vote, dual nationality and the position of so-called aliens. These decisions were made at a meeting of the bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum after the Vigil. In attendance were members of a task force nominated at the 'Restore Zimbabwe' Conference to carry forward the work of the conference.

Friday 8th November: Police were called to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, otherwise known as Chatham House, when a group of Vigil supporters staged a demonstration protesting at the recognition given to Mugabe's visiting Tourism Minister (and farm looter) Walter Mzembe. Mzembe had been invited to speak during his visit to London for an international tourism conference. African diplomats in dapper black suits and shiny black shoes glared poison at the demonstrators as they went into the venue. Soon afterwards a police van arrived and a policeman went into Chatham House. He quickly re-emerged and gave us a friendly wave before driving off. (We had arranged police permission for the protest.) 1 – 0 to the Vigil.

Vigil Highlights 2013

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 26 January 2014 14:03 -

Saturday 9th November: It is already clear that manipulation by the mercenary Israeli company Nikuv was a decisive factor in Mugabe's 'victory'. The Vigil is sending an open letter to the Israeli Prime Minister and the people of Israel: *For the last 33 years Zimbabweans have been fighting to end the Mugabe dictatorship so they too can enjoy the fruits of democracy and good governance. It is wholly unacceptable that their hopes for a better future were once again ruthlessly dashed because Mugabe had help from an Israeli company Nikuv. Nikuv corrupted the voters roll so that nearly one million voters were denied the right to vote on election-day. It is no exaggeration to say it was Nikuv which delivered election victory to Mugabe considering the tyrant's winning margin was one million.*

Saturday 16th November: At a meeting of the bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum after the Vigil, it was agreed to approach Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights for advice on legal options open to us to challenge the rigged elections. Also discussed were calls by some MDC leaders for the lifting of the targeted measures against Mugabe cronies on the grounds that these sanctions provided a fig-leaf for Mugabe's mis-governance. The Vigil's view is that sanctions should be continued and indeed extended to include those who rigged the elections.

Saturday 23rd November: As winter closes in on us at the Vigil, we are in despair at Zimbabwe's hopeless government. We read that MDC MP Eddie Cross says that nothing is being done to tackle corruption. He says: 'I cannot think of a single Minister (perhaps one and even he is questionable) that is not guilty of gross corruption.'

Friday 29th November: We are grateful to Wilbert Mukori for representing us at a conference in Holland organised by the Zimbabwe Europe Network. He said it was clear the EU wanted to lift sanctions and they were prepared to accept the elections even though they know they were rigged.

Saturday 30th November: The Vigil is launching a campaign to alert British MPs and other opinion formers to the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe as the EU moves to lift the remaining targeted measures. Supporters are being asked to send the following letter to MPs etc: *Zimbabweans in the UK are grateful for the sanctuary we have been given here in these desperate days for our homeland . . . Our hopes of change were dashed in July when the elections were stolen with the help of the Chinese and the Israeli ballot-rigging company, Nikuv, ending the four year coalition with the Movement for Democratic Change . . . The end of the restraining MDC influence on the government and the exposure of the hollowness of Zanu PF election promises threaten to lead to a new lurch to a North Korean-type siege mentality.*

Vigil Highlights 2013

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 26 January 2014 14:03 -

Saturday 7th December: As we mourned the death of Nelson Mandela, the Vigil was shocked to learn that the UN has apparently agreed to divert some of the aid going to help Zimbabwe's starving people to help pay for the illegal regime's pie-in-the-sky economic development plan. T

he Vigil is

sending an open letter to the UK's International Development Secretary:

We appeal to the UK government not to allow any of its aid to be diverted to prop up the Mugabe regime and, in particular, we call on it to exercise vigilance to stop aid being denied to opponents of the Mugabe regime . . .

A large group of Vigil supporters joined mourners outside the nearby South African High Commission. We recall how when Mandela visited London in 2008 we confronted him with a banner saying:

'Mandela ignores Mugabe's terror. Shame / Mandela speak out. Support a free Zimbabwe'. That very evening he spoke of a failure of leadership in Zimbabwe.

Saturday 14th December: The man hired by South Africa to interpret the Mandela memorial proceedings to the deaf turns out to be a schizophrenic fraud. His gestures were apparently as meaningless as those of President Zuma, whom the Vigil remembers as a man who betrayed his promise to deliver free and fair elections to Zimbabweans.

Saturday 21st December: The Vigil welcomes signs that the MDC is emerging from its catatonic state following the stolen elections. Five months after we at the Vigil demanded new elections the MDC has now come on board and demanded a rerun. In an end of year statement Tsvangirai said: 'The lesson from the July 31 poll is that all reforms, including security sector and media reforms, that were agreed to under the GPA are mandatory'. Hallelujah!

Saturday 28th December: We appeal to western embassies in Harare to urgently investigate new reports that food aid is being refused to opposition supporters. This comes despite the announcement that the UK is pouring more money into feeding Zimbabwe.