

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2016

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Thirst for human rights – Saturday 2nd January: A representative of the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights has been on an undercover visit to Zimbabwe during which he travelled extensively. He reported finding a thirst for human rights. He said he had spoken at many meetings, including in the Zanu PF heartland of Mashonaland West. Among those attending were university lecturers as well as pastors who said they were prepared to speak from the pulpit about human rights. Our envoy said that while he was in Harare he tried to renew his expired passport under a provision in the new constitution providing for dual citizenship. But when his name was entered into the computer a message flashed up 'Threat to national security' originating from the CIO Directorate. The lady processing his claim asked anxiously 'What have you done?' When he said he was a human rights campaigner she said: 'No it's political. Just go now or it has to be referred to security.'

Indigenous hot air – Saturday 9th January: As far as producing hot air is concerned the Vigil is confident that Zimbabwe is a world beater. With swarms of political parties quacking away like ducks on steroids, it is one industry in which we can more than compete. So it comes as a surprise that in the 'clarified' indigenisation guidelines (ensuring black control of companies) the government has seen it necessary to include air among the affected categories. The guidelines were the product of Indigenisation Minister Zhuwao, nephew of Mugabe. But even Zhuwao is outdone for hot air by Zanu PF spokesman Simon Kaya Moyo who says his party has done 'extremely well' over the past two years with 'the generality of the population feeling the effects of ZimAsset'. We suppose the hot air has at least kept them warm in winter . . . As the Vigil

marked the passing of ten months since the abduction of Itai Dzamara on 9th

March, we were encouraged to hear the message of Pastor Patrick Mugadza who has called on Mugabe to step aside and hand power to an interim authority. He said 'Fear has gotten us to where we are. Dzamara was a seed and many Dzamaras will come up if I disappear.'

Appeal for UN aid – Saturday 16th January: The United Nations is understood to be considering a Zimbabwean request to provide emergency aid for Mugabe's 92nd

birthday celebrations in Masvingo next month. UN East and Southern Africa spokesman, Idi Ott, said UNFED had been expecting a request for help because of the severe drought affecting Sub-Saharan Africa. He said there had been surprise at UN headquarters at the lateness of the request because it normally takes some months to mount an international appeal of this magnitude. A Zanu PF spokesman was reassuring: 'People need have no fear for Comrade Gushungo. He is well-fed and there will also be enough food for the whole Politburo as well'.

Time to intervene? – Saturday 23rd January: With the Mugabe regime seemingly determined to use any means to cling to power despite the deepening crisis in Zimbabwe, the outside world must be prepared to think the unthinkable. Former Botswana President Festus Mogae was clear in an interview that sovereignty has limits. He made no direct reference to Zimbabwe but his message was unmistakable. Here is part of what he had to say: 'Sovereignty has limits like any other right. A leader cannot kill and harass his people and hide behind sovereignty. A true leader does not kill, but protects his people. We still have leaders in Africa who think they are indispensable, larger than life and more important than their countries. That must stop. If a leader loses control, the world will and should intervene to save the people'.

No African country has the will or capacity to intervene to avert disaster in Zimbabwe and Mugabe's all-weather friends China and Russia will prevent any action by the UN. So it's up to Zimbabwe's real friends – the countries that keep on putting their hands in their pockets – to help in spite of Zanu PF's bile. Only this week Rural Development Minister Abednego Ncube told traditional leaders that they had not received their November and December allowances because of (long gone) Western sanctions. This is the cloud cuckoo land that Zanu PF is living in, supported by back-slapping Western diplomats having the holiday of their lives. The Vigil thinks the West must stop propping up this evil regime and instead prepare plans to avert the slide into violence born of poverty and desperation.

British doctor seizes farm – Saturday 30th January: After months besieged on their farm at Centenary, 20 police armed with AK 47s on Friday forcibly evicted Phillip Rankin and his wife.

The farm has long been coveted by British medical practitioner Dr Sylvester Nyatsuro and his wife Veronica, who are reported to be connected to Grace Mugabe. Mrs Nyatsuro is alleged to have planted invaders on the farm when she was over last year on a visit from the UK. The police refused access to lawyers acting for Mr Rankin, loaded his furniture onto lorries along with Mr Rankin and drove off before he could harvest his crops.

The behaviour of the Nyatsuros has disgusted Zimbabwean exiles in the UK and the Vigil is to stage another protest outside their Nottingham clinic and will also be running the following petition to Prime Minister David Cameron: *Zimbabwean exiles in the United Kingdom and sympathisers are appalled by the behaviour of Dr Sylvester Nyatsuro and his wife Veronica who run the Willows Medical Centre in Nottingham. Dr Nyatsuro is a British citizen, long resident in this country, yet he has illegally seized a farm in Zimbabwe owned by a white Zimbabwean farmer, Mr Phillip Rankin, who bought it with the approval of the Mugabe government. Dr Nyatsuro and his wife are reported to be connected to Grace Mugabe. We are puzzled why a British doctor should want a farm in Zimbabwe since he and his wife are apparently in full-time employment here and have no known farming expertise in a country facing starvation. We ask your government to consider revoking Dr Nyatsuro's citizenship on the grounds that 'it was obtained by means of fraud, false representation or concealment of any material fact'. We also question his suitability to run an NHS clinic in Nottingham while farming in Zimbabwe.*

Pressure mounts on farm looter – Saturday 6th February: More than 60 exiled Zimbabweans and supporters yesterday took part in a protest outside the clinic in Nottingham run by a Zimbabwean immigrant doctor who has seized a farm in Zimbabwe. Demonstrators were not surprised to see a notice on the front door saying the clinic was closed because of 'unforeseen circumstances'. But people were in the building because someone from the clinic called the police and complained we were taking pictures of them through the window. We replied that pictures were being taken of us from the clinic. A Vigil supporter posted this letter to Dr Nyatsuro through the clinic's letter box:

'As fellow Zimbabweans we wish to express our disgust at your abuse of British hospitality. You work as a doctor for the NHS but feel free to steal a white-owned farm in Zimbabwe in your spare time. We have tried to meet you to discuss this matter but all we got were lies, evasion and legal threats. So we return to your clinic to draw the attention of your patients and the wider community to your greed and hypocrisy. If you wanted to have a farm in Zimbabwe why are you here? Get out of the UK and don't come back.'

Many motorists hooted in support of the demonstration when they drove past and the Vigil engaged many local people about the issue. We have already written to the local NHS Commissioning Group drawing attention to the matter with copies to the General Medical Council and the Department of Health. Ironically another white farmer has also been driven off the land. But we have no sympathy for this farmer, Yvonne Goddard. She had been funding Zanu PF until the party bigwigs simply decided to take everything – a fate we fully expect to be visited on themselves in due course.

A no-brainer – Saturday 13th February: Having waited until Mugabe returned from his sacred month-long Christmas holiday abroad, the government finally got around to admitting what it had persistently denied and declared a state of emergency because of food shortages. The Vigil's sister organisation ROHR expressed the desperation in Zimbabwe by taking part in a Valentine's march in Harare. We received this message from a ROHR member: 'The march started at the corner of Inez Terrace and Speke Avenue. We marched into Julius Nyerere then into Nelson Mandela singing the national anthem. As we approached Second Street towards Parliament, where we intended to place a bouquet, we encountered the full force of the vicious riot police. They beat up people badly with baton sticks. Three people are hospitalized at Westend Hospital. One ROHR member is in a bad state.'

Earlier in the week, speaking at the official launch of the aid appeal, Vice-President Mnangagwa spoke of a food disaster as if it had suddenly arisen although experts had been warning of it for at least the last six months. Perhaps he made the mistake of believing the lies of Agriculture Minister Mad Made who said only recently that Zimbabwe had plenty of food in stock. Mnangagwa will also no doubt back Mad Made's insistence that any aid should not include GM food. So donors beware: you could be wasting your money sending us poisonous food when people can starve in a non-GM way. Mnangagwa was precise about Zimbabwe's requirements, which he said amounted to \$1,572,009,953. This billion plus included money to repair irrigation equipment and livestock support and restocking, as well as soap, pharmaceuticals and three dollars for sanitaryware. In short, Zimbabwe needs everything except GM food. Mugabe may not acknowledge it, but people are already starving. Perhaps Mugabe will call off his \$800,000 92nd birthday bash next week to devote the food to the suffering masses. It's what they call a no-brainer . . . obviously the right thing. But the Vigil fears that in Zanu PF's caseno-brainer must be taken literally.

Internal contradictions – Saturday 20th February: With Dr Grace now openly described as a witchdoctor, it came as no surprise that Mugabe was magically transported to the Vigil to try to raise some of the \$800,000 apparently wanted for his 92

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birthday party with its 92 kg cake. That the party is being held at the Zimbabwe Ruins is entirely appropriate. What may seem less appropriate to donors is spending so much feeding Mugabe at a time when Zimbabwe is appealing for \$1.5 billion to help the starving. The birthday boy – played by Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask – turned up sleepily at the Vigil holding upside down one of our posters 'Where is Itai Dzamara?' He was presented with several cakes and a colourful birthday painting showing Mugabe drowning in a tide of blood. Pinned to the painting were Zimbabwean hundred trillion dollar notes worth two quadrillion, five hundred trillion Zimbabwe dollars. Surely enough for anyone's party. Mugabe was surrounded by Vigil supporters carrying posters such as: 'Pay Mugabe in his own currency', 'Let Mugabe eat cake', and 'Emergency appeal for Mugabe's birthday party'.

Mugabe was fresh from making a televised address in Harare to appeal for an end to factionalism in Zanu PF following clashes in Harare between war veterans and riot police. Perhaps with Grace in mind, he spoke of the need 'for a whip of discipline'. The clashes prompted war vet leader Mutsvangwa to make an extraordinary attack on Grace who he suggested was under the influence of occult powers. Perhaps this was one of the things Mugabe had in mind when he spoke of 'contradictions' in Zanu PF. A more obvious contradiction came in an answer given by Agriculture Ministry Secretary Ringson Chitsiko when he was questioned about the food situation by the parliamentary committee on agriculture, which asked why Zambia had surplus maize when it was also affected by El Nino weather conditions. The difference, Chitsiko said, was due to 'serious farming in Zambia at commercial level'.

The contradictions between the public and private faces of the ruling party have been shown in a new light by ousted Vice President Joice Mujuru in a lengthy interview with the UK Sunday Times. 'I think this is pointing to the end', said Mujuru. 'He no longer has the energy to tell them to stop, and no one listens to him. He has no respect now – from anybody. It's painful.' According to Mujuru, Mugabe often falls asleep in cabinet meetings. 'He would speak for 15 minutes then nod off and I would then chair the meeting, with everyone ignoring the fact he was asleep.' Asked about Mugabe's accusations that she had consulted witchdoctors about his death, she said: 'I have never used magic. A head of state using his platform to lie and believing stories about frogs being kept in a calabash, and if one dies then he will die? I said to myself, "What a backward man."'

Kick out Zanu PF – Saturday 27th February: Some of the UK's main newspapers published lengthy articles today on the Nottingham doctor, Sylvester Nyatsuro, who has seized a farm in Zimbabwe. The articles coincided with the presentation of the Vigil's petition to 10 Downing Street calling on the UK to revoke Dr Nyatsuro's British citizenship. What prompted the two papers to revisit the story was the emergence of photographs which showed Dr Nyatsuro and his wife Veronica socialising with Grace Mugabe. As the Daily Mail put it 'Grinning with Mrs Mugabe, GP who was handed white couple's farm'. The photograph was seen as disproving the Nyatsuros' denial that nepotism had played a part in the allocation of the farm to someone who has become a British citizen and lived in the UK for the past 15 years. The mass circulation Daily Mail has been assiduously digging away at the scandal. That it has now been joined so enthusiastically by the upmarket Daily Telegraph perhaps reflects the Telegraph's irritation at the Nyatsuros' earlier blustering legal threats against the paper which prompted it to drop a previous story from its website. The same Zanu PF bullying tactics were made against the Vigil but we have not been deterred from demonstrating outside their Nottingham clinic to show their patients what hypocrites the Nyatsuros are. Our latest protest yesterday was attended by 50 from as far afield as Edinburgh and Portsmouth. A Daily Mail journalist interviewed us. She then tried to ask Veronica Nyatsuro some questions, only to be pushed angrily away.

Many of the Nottingham demonstrators turned up to support the presentation of the Vigil petition addressed to Prime Minister Cameron. It was accompanied by this letter: *Dear Prime Minister: Zimbabwean exiles in the United Kingdom and supporters ask your government to look at the case of Dr Sylvester Nyatsuro, a GP running a clinic in Nottingham with his wife Veronica. Dr Nyatsuro is from Zimbabwe but has lived in the UK for the past 15 years and is now a British citizen. The Sunday Times says he came here as an asylum seeker but this has not stopped him from violently seizing a farm in Zimbabwe owned by a Zimbabwean citizen, Phillip Rankin and his family. We are not aware that Dr Nyatsuro has any farming knowledge or whether he intends to relinquish his Nottingham practice so we wonder what justification he has to take over one of the last remaining white-owned farms in Zimbabwe, beyond being given the go ahead by the Mugabes with whom he and his wife are reported to have connections. The Zimbabwe Vigil draws your attention to the starvation threatening millions of Zimbabweans and the urgent need to resuscitate agriculture and asks you whether 'slimming expert' Dr Nyatsuro is a person likely to further this goal. We believe that he and his wife are Mugabe predators and Dr Nyatsuro's citizenship should be revoked because we believe it must have been obtained under false pretences.*

Interesting times – Saturday 5th March: There is apparently an old Chinese warning against living in 'interesting times' . . . interesting meaning dangerous, troubled, violent, precarious, unstable etc: in brief, all the 'interesting' conditions that now prevail in Zimbabwe. So hard luck to us after a week which saw the unveiling of Joice Mujuru's People First Party and the suspension from Zanu PF of War Veterans' Minister Mutsvangwa. Both events were overshadowed by Mugabe's announcement that \$15 billion had been looted from the Marange diamond fields and by the government's chaotic seizure of the Chiadzwa diamond mines owned by Mugabe's pals. 'We wuz robbed,' claimed Mugabe. 'Where has all the money gone?' feigning not to have noticed the diamonds on the soles of the feet of his well-shod wife and well-heeled cronies and all-weather friends. Chief friend Comrade China says it is offended and hopes it's all been a mistake. 'We hope that the Zimbabwean side would earnestly safeguard the legitimate rights of the Chinese companies and employees, according to the local laws and the 'Agreement on the encouragement and reciprocal protection of investments between China and Zimbabwe,' Chinese ambassador Huang Ping said. Laws? Agreement? It appears the Chinese were born yesterday. But anyway it must mean farewell to the long-promised 'mega deals' with China which we were told would usher in the promised land.

Zimbabwe is floundering with little sign of meaningful reform and sustainable, broad-based recovery says the International Crisis Group. 'Upbeat economic projections by international institutions are predicated on government rhetoric about new policy commitments and belief in the country's potential, but there are growing doubts that Zanu PF can "walk the talk" of reform. Conditions are likely to deteriorate further due to insolvency, drought and growing food insecurity,' it says.

On a cold rainy day, the Vigil welcomed human rights activist Ben Freeth on a brief visit to the UK. He went on to speak at the Zimbabwe Action Forum held after the Vigil and was encouraging about our work. He said the situation at home was dreadful and remarked that he recently went back to see his stolen farm and found there were no crops, the irrigation system had been destroyed and his former workers were unemployed and impoverished. He warned that Zanu PF would be looking to control people by exploiting British and American food aid for party-political purposes. 'The British tax payer will be paying to keep Mugabe in power'. Ben said he was sceptical about the sudden conversion to enlightened democrat of die-hard Zanu PF thieving functionary Joice Mujuru. He recalled how she and her murdered husband General Solomon Mujuru had deceived and stolen their farm from its previous owner who had been forced to flee the country with only one suitcase. He was critical of the European diplomats living in what he called the 'Harare bubble' and said how difficult it was to get any of them to go out and see things for themselves.

Culture of denial – Saturday 12th March: Where is Mugabe? The government's mouthpiece the Herald says he has gone to a cultural festival in India (accompanied by the Foreign Affairs Minister and a planeload of overpaid lackeys). The fact that the obscure festival was not even attended by the Indian President didn't matter. The Vigil knows that this is probably all a cover for another trip to his doctors in Singapore. The International Monetary Fund has concluded its latest consultations in Harare leaving the door ajar to new loans to help bankrupt Zanu PF. The IMF seems to think that promises of reform by the regime are bankable. Zimbabwean ministers like Chinamasa can promise the moon but no one can deliver except Mugabe. And, as he has shown over civil servants bonuses, he will not make any decision which will imperil his hold on power.

The culture of denial in Mugabe's Zanu PF is shown by the party's brazen hypocrisy over the abduction of human rights activist Itai Dzamara. We welcome the statement by the US Embassy in Harare on the anniversary of this outrage demanding justice. We urge the United States to take the advice of Bob Corker, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who called on President Obama to prevent new lending to Zimbabwe unless there is meaningful progress to restore the rule of law and improve human rights. The Vigil believes that any financial help to prop up Mugabe's odious regime will simply prolong the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe. It was good to see old friends from the MDC UK who joined us today to mark one year since the abduction of Itai Dzamara. For Vigil supporters it was the second Dzamara demonstration in a week following a protest outside the Embassy on 9th March, which was the actual day he was seized.

Mugabe's 'hit and run' – Saturday 19th March: President Mugabe, stung by the growing opposition of war veterans, complained at a rally in Bindura 'some of you are going as far as China telling them that we need a new leader'. The comment is ironic given reports that the

nonagenarian is soon to go on yet another jaunt to the Far East – this time to Tokyo – which some might think shows an absence of leadership. The Herald will no doubt tell us that the trip is as important as the Indian cultural festival that Mugabe used as a pretext last week to go to Singapore to see his doctors. But what credulity has the Herald? This week it splashed a story that a majority of Zimbabweans approve of Mugabe's leadership – only for it to emerge a day later that the paper was repeating a dodgy two-year-old report. Contrary to the Herald's delayed 'scoop', it is clear that even the war veterans have fallen out of love with Mugabe even though he assures us all is under control. No one will starve he told supporters at the rally. 'The food is there and what is slowing distribution is the challenge we are facing in transportation', he said. To alleviate the transport problem the district development fund had adopted a 'hit and run' concept and has ten trucks going around the country moving food from the grain marketing board depots to the public. Ten trucks? All solved then!

The great demise – Saturday 2nd April: There is growing concern in the diaspora about the wellbeing of Zimbabweans when Mugabe goes. The people the Vigil worry most about are those who have been led to believe that Mugabe is semi-divine. For them the loss will be cataclysmic. Mugabe has gone to see his doctors in Singapore twice in the last few weeks. We must be brave. Others have gone through similar trauma. We remember the mass hysteria in North Korea at the departure of the Great Leader Kim Jong Il, whose people had been led to believe that he could never get ill. Scenes of public grief were broadcast around the world. Zimbabweans must show we are made of sterner stuff. We expect Harare to come to even more of a halt when the great transition occurs. So outside help will be urgently required to minimise grief-related suicides and post-traumatic stress disorders. To do our bit, we in the diaspora are appealing to the United Nations to prepare to send teams of bereavement counsellors who could fan out across the country. Para-psychotherapists could even be air-dropped in remote areas.

The Vigil's approach is two-pronged. We have also written to the American Ambassador in London urging the US to oppose any IMF / World Bank loans to Zimbabwe until the situation is clarified. Surely no-one wants the money to end up in the wrong hands? Here is our letter: *Dear Ambassador Barzun. With the Mugabe regime nearing its end, Zimbabwean exiles in the UK wish to convey our reservations about the apparent readiness of the International Monetary Fund to advance new loans to Zimbabwe. We ask what purpose this financial injection will serve when there is no clear idea of who will receive the money? We draw your attention to the latest index of economic freedom which concludes that Zimbabwe remains one of the most repressed economies in the world due to rampant corruption and government mismanagement.*

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Can of maggots – Saturday 9th April: Zimbabweans in exile join in demanding a commission of inquiry into the involvement of Zimbabweans in offshore tax havens and believe it will open a

can of maggots that have been sucking dry the carcass of our economy. The leaking of millions of documents from the dodgy Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca has exposed the involvement of Zanu PF financiers Billy Rautenbach and Nicholas van Hoogstraten. This was predictable but it is also alleged that Mugabe himself has used the firm to hide his vast wealth in havens around the world. The MDC MP Eddie Cross says Mugabe's personal wealth is estimated at over \$3 billion gained from all sorts of activities in Zimbabwe and the region. He adds: 'The disclosure by Mr. Mugabe that some \$15 billion in revenues had somehow vanished from the Marange diamond fields between 2008 and 2015 reveals the extent of these activities. He is known to own, directly or indirectly, luxury homes in South Africa (Sandton and Durban North), Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai as well as in Harare.'

The Japanese commentator Ken Yamamoto, who closely follows Zimbabwean affairs, describes Mugabe's disclosure as: 'the mother of all scandals'. He says: 'With the stolen \$15 billion, Zimbabwe could have provided its economy a huge bailout, funding refurbishment of railways infrastructure, construction of power plants, construction and expansion of national highways, a bailout to the sinking industrial sector, provided clean water in cities, funded alternative agriculture and processing industries and invested in clean energy.' Yamamoto goes on: 'For a 92-year old man whose leadership has wasted an entire generation to laugh and crack jokes while talking about such grand theft under his watch is a vulgar insult to millions of jobless Zimbabweans and millions more who are presently being fed by donors.' He concludes: 'This kind of plunder must immediately make Zimbabwe pass a vote of no confidence in Mugabe and his government. If this theft does not cause Zimbabweans to demand that he resign, then nothing else will. In that case, going forward, Zimbabweans must just be left to their own devices and the donors currently feeding the population must just take their efforts to other countries. The country cannot be helped. And no more of this nonsense that Zimbabweans are the most literate people in Africa.'

War veteran and former Zanu PF insider Margaret Dongo also has no illusions about the greed and corruption in Zanu PF. In a recent interview with the Daily News she said: 'I left Zanu PF in 1995, and watching from the terraces I am seeing people fighting for a dwindling gravy puddle. The party is a sinking ship and it's all about who has power now to access more of the little loot left before the inevitable big bang.' She went on to say: 'The 90 per cent unemployment obtaining in the country, the starving masses that the government is unable to feed, the dilapidated infrastructure all around, the serious shortage of drugs, deteriorating education standards, poor sanitary facilities are all a result of Zanu PF's misrule.'

36 years of destruction – Saturday 16th April: As we marked Zimbabwe's 36th independence anniversary, exiles in the UK were joined by Mugabe himself outside the London Embassy. His Excellency, in the form of Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask and carrying a poster reading '36 years of me. What else can I destroy?' answered some of our questions. The first was how

he justified spending \$20 million on foreign trips so far this year at a time when the economy is alleged not to be booming. 'Well, this trip to London is costing nothing', he said. 'As you may know I have recently had to make one or three essential visits to the Far East so I have collected lots of air miles'. Our second question to his well-travelled Excellency was about the 300 cattle that he announced he had donated to the African Union last year to reduce the AU's dependence on Western aid. 'It just struck me that no one had ever thought of a gift by way of cattle to the AU', he said, brushing aside reports that none of the beasts had been sent . . . Mugabe was then asked about Zanu PF's rejection of genetically modified food – a move condemned by Zimbabwean farmer Nyasha Mudukuti in an article in the Wall Street Journal:

So my country – a country that can't feed itself – will refuse what millions around the world eat safely every day . . . we're apparently better dead than fed'. The nonagenarian went on: 'What some people don't realise is the effect of illegal sanctions. As well as inflicting aids on Africa and causing our drought, the West is now determined to exterminate us with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) so that they can control us like they do the troublemakers who caused chaos in Harare on Thursday in an attempt at regime change'. The Vigil is pleased to see that our sister organisation ROHR was prominent among those which took part in the MDC demonstration on Thursday.

Emperor with no clothes – Saturday 23rd April: The newish American Ambassador to Harare, Peter Harry Thomas Jnr, has quickly got the hang of Mugabe, speaking this week of his 'wicked sense of humour'. Commenting on Mugabe's sanctions mantra, Mr Thomas showed he had come to realise that the President is a joke. Hans Christian Anderson's 'The Emperor's New Clothes' is a story about a vain emperor who is tricked into wearing what he is told are clothes that are invisible to those who are stupid. Everyone raves about his clothes until a child cries out 'he isn't wearing anything at all'. It often takes an outsider to say that the emperor has no clothes. People were merely puzzled as Mugabe bowed to a picture of himself at his Independence Day address. They pretended not to see he was exposing himself. Zanu PF supporters didn't dare see the humour when Mugabe told them that the economy was on a rebound, with firms reopening for business and creating jobs. They didn't even laugh when he said: 'My government is determined to translate political independence into meaningfulness by attending to the socio-economic needs of our people'. Even claims that bankrupt parastatals such as Air Zimbabwe and National Railways of Zimbabwe had come out of the woods, failed to draw a smile, let alone his comment that 'progress has been made in the development of social infrastructure in health, education and housing'. Nobody laughed when he promised to improve the wellbeing of government workers so that they can earn salaries above the poverty datum line. Perhaps they did not get the 'wicked' joke that he has promised the International Monetary Fund to halve the government wage bill this year. There was not even a giggle when he concluded 'one of the greatest tributes we can pay to Zimbabwe is to shun corruption, regionalism and nepotism'. Mind you many people also didn't get the joke when he promptly flew off to the United States for the ceremonial signing of the UN climate change agreement and droned on as usual about invisible sanctions against Zimbabwe when signatories – mainly lower-ranking officials – were supposed to keep their remarks to 40 seconds. But those at the

UN meeting realized that Mugabe had not travelled all the way to New York for a mere 40 seconds . . . he and his cronies no doubt had serious shopping to do for some more new clothes.

Déjà vu again – Saturday 30th April: May Day is celebrated around the world to honour workers. Indeed, Zimbabwe calls it Workers' Day. But the MDC says it should now be rebranded Vendors' Day instead. MDC spokesman Obert Gutu says there is nothing to celebrate given the depressing state of the economy. Zanu PF, he pointed out, had failed to create the 2.2 million jobs it promised at the 2013 elections. Instead it had created 2 million 'vendors and loafers'. An equally gloomy view came from People's Democratic Party spokesman Jacob Mafume: 'The nation is facing insurmountable challenges underlined by a decaying economy, high unemployment and total collapse of service delivery, a ravaging drought and general hopelessness among the generality of the people,' he said. 'About 98% of youths are in the informal sector, 60% of the industries which we had operating in 2010 have shut down, 83% of our people live on less than \$1 a day and our women still die while giving birth because our hospitals lack basic facilities and medicines.'

Even people in work are suffering from the economic meltdown as banks struggle to find cash. As Radio Voice of the People puts it 'it's déjà vu again' with many workers reliving the nightmare of 2008 when banks imposed daily cash withdrawal limits. Back then the financial collapse led of course to the South African-brokered coalition government which pulled the country back from the abyss but saved Mugabe. The Vigil fears that this time Britain and the international community will come to the rescue of Mugabe with mad new lending to a totally corrupt and self-serving regime. The announcement this week of a conference to be held in London in July to discuss a proposed deal between Mugabe and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank confirms the Vigil's suspicions that once again the UK has misread the situation in Zimbabwe. You could say it is déjà vu yet again. Former finance minister Tendai Biti's People's Democratic Party has accused the British Ambassador in Harare, Catriona Laing, of lobbying the US State Department to support Mugabe's bid for renewed IMF funding, warning her that appeasing Zanu PF is 'tantamount to riding a leopard'. What does Ms Laing think that Mugabe's gang will do with the money apart from paying the Israeli Nikuv company to rig the next elections as usual? Wouldn't it be better to wait until Zanu PF actually implements the new constitution and better still after free and fair elections before they give Zimbabwe more money. As it looks at the moment there are strong indications that Zanu PF will again resort to violence in the run up to the elections in 2018.

The megabus arrives? – Saturday 7th May: There is a saying in the UK that you can wait ages for a bus and then several will come along together. It seems the same thing happens with news about Zimbabwe reported in the foreign press. There was a drought in stories about Zimbabwe for years but now the buses are coming regularly. Not long ago we had Cecil the lion

capturing world attention. Then everyone was fascinated by the extravagant parties given for nonagenarian Mugabe as if he were Louis XVI, with Grace his Marie-Antoinette advising the hungry to eat cake (shortly before the royal couple were downsized by a head). The buses have continued coming, with widespread interest in Zimbabwe selling off wild life. As Fox News headlined: 'Zimbabwe's drought cash crunch forcing the nation to sell its animals'. (Thinking of Zimbabwe selling off its wild life, its nurses, its graduates, its women to Kuwait, suggests there may be room for a sell off of politicians from among its dozens of parties.)

Among journalists there is a saying 'a nose for news'. You would think that Zimbabwe is now positively stinking because they have jumped in force on the latest bus with the announcement that Zimbabwe is to print money again. BBC: 'Zimbabwe to print its own version of US dollar', Bloomberg: 'Zimbabwe introduces new currency angering everyone', International Business Times: 'Zimbabwe to print its own US dollars amidst severe cash shortage and deepening economic woes'. The world thinks that this smells – its the megabus – and it expects to see, as the Vigil diary put it last week, déjà vu again, with the Zimbabwe Reserve Bank sending out runners onto the streets to buy up US dollars with worthless bits of paper as inflation rises again into the billions. And perhaps King Mugabe and co being downsized . . .

Facing reality – Saturday 14th May: Exiled Zimbabweans in the UK welcomed remarks this week by US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Peter Harry Thomas Jr, who called for full implementation of the constitution, an up-to-date voters' roll, the elimination of corruption and a 'reliable' court system. Speaking to journalists in Harare, Mr Thomas said this was critical if Zimbabwe is to have free and fair elections in 2018. He added: 'We don't want to see violence; we don't want to see intimidation. We want to see people who are given the opportunity to campaign without fear of harassment and the start is full implementation of the 2013 constitution'. So far so good. But the Vigil would like clarification of Mr Thomas's assertion that the US is 'in support of Zimbabwe's re-engagement with the international financial institutions'. What exactly does this mean? Zimbabwe desperately needs money, sure. The reason is clear: Mugabe and his cronies have stolen everything. There is pervasive corruption at all levels as well as institutionalised incompetence. An example: Health Minister Dr David Parirenyatwa says his ministry needs \$65 million urgently to buy drugs. He said the Treasury approved a budget of \$450,000 for Midlands province but it was given only \$3,000 – and that was also to cover patients' food and utility bills . . . Vice-President Mphoko of course blamed Western sanctions.

The Vigil's fear is that 're-engagement' with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank means approval of some creative bookkeeping to deal with Zimbabwe's debt to these institutions allowing the imploding regime to access more loans to enable it to steal yet another election. Having been turned down by his 'all-weather friends' Mugabe has been left with no option but to try to con money from the enemy and has come up with a plethora of promises from dealing with corruption to a land audit and compensation for white farmers, from halving

the state wage bill to reforming bankrupt parastatals. All this is fantasy as there is no real will or capacity to achieve these goals. The IMF has recently toughened its hitherto craven language about the regime. We want it to get even tougher and tell Mugabe that new money will only come if the West is at long last allowed in to observe the elections and judge whether they have been free and fair. As we have pointed out before, the stakes are high. Zanu PF has long been a malignant influence in the region as is shown clearly by recent developments in South Africa. Witness the paranoia of ANC Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe, facing growing opposition to his party, parroting the line that the West is pushing for 'regime change' in South Africa. Where did we hear that before?

Waving the flag – Saturday 21st May: The suggestion that the Zimbabwean government is looking at ways of 'taxing' the diaspora may be fanciful but it is clear that both Zanu PF and the opposition are looking hungrily at the money earned by the millions of Zimbabweans who have fled Mugabe's economic Armageddon. The government, we were told this week, has drafted a Diaspora Policy which seeks to tap into exiles' remittances estimated at \$1.8 billion a year – way more than the country is attracting in foreign direct investment. It is typical of the Zanu PF mentality that the government should think it has a claim to any of this money. It's bad enough that hundreds of thousands of family members in Zimbabwe have become so dependent on remittances – indeed appealing for ever more help. We now learn from a prominent opposition member that their own attempt to raise money from the diaspora for an election war fund has met with little response. Can they be surprised given their dismissive attitude to the diaspora down the years? To them the diaspora has only ever been a cash cow. If the government does try to 'tax' the diaspora we must consider how we can pay in 'bond' notes.

Wednesday 25th May: Africa Day – a large group from the Vigil went to a performance of a play about Zimbabwe 'After Independence' at the Arcola Theatre in London. The play examined the land question in Zimbabwe and the theatre was packed. Our group danced, sang and drummed afterwards to an appreciative audience in the theatre bar including members of the cast. The producer Chris Foxon sent us this email afterwards: *'Just a quick note to express an enormous thanks for joining us last night. It was a fabulous event and I hope it helped raise awareness of your work. Certainly the audience loved it, and our cast were blown away.'*

The big stink – Saturday 28th May: Fresh from his 'million man' charade in Harare, Mugabe flew off on Air Mugabe to enjoy being the only President from the 79 members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States to attend a meeting in Papua New Guinea. Apparently not even the Papua New Guinea President was attending. Papua New Guinea? If you consult the atlas you will find it is part of an island east of Indonesia and north of Australia. A spokesman for PNG (as it is known to those who have consulted the atlas) said his country was keen to raise its international profile because not many people knew where it was.

'They think it is part of Africa' he said. Well, Air Mugabe knows where PNG is: conveniently close to Mugabe's doctors in Singapore. It's been more than a week since he last saw them so surely more injections are due – apart from changing the nappy of his grandson. Mugabe was accompanied by the usual large delegation which included Grace of course, Industry and Commerce Minister Mike Bimha and Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi. Permanent secretaries Ambassador Joey (yet another) Bimha and George Charamba, among the usual flunkies, helped fill the Air Mugabe plane. The PNG is popular for its diving and other leisure facilities. But the Vigil is worried that Mugabe's insatiable trips abroad are believed to have cost the country \$80 million this year. How come he is squandering this money when thousands of hungry, deluded Zanu PF youth were left to make their own way home from the 'million man' march?

Jacob Mafume, spokesman for Tendai Biti's People's Democratic Party, said: 'Mugabe suffers from an excessive attention seeking sickness. He is like a man who messes up his own house with his waste and keeps leaving the house because the house smells'. This struck a chord with us because an article has appeared in the London Times on this theme, even mentioning Mugabe. The article about dictators talked of the overpowering stench at the French King Louis XIV's palace at Versailles. The palace had 700 rooms but no functioning lavatories for nearly 200 years. Even then the soon to be executed Queen Marie Antoinette was said to have been drenched by the contents of a chamber pot emptied from an upper window. The place apparently stank more than Chitungwiza. The writer of the article noted 'eventually people cease to be awed by dictator display and start to laugh at it . . . beneath every showy dictatorship lies a secret cesspool. When the smell becomes overpowering the revolution starts'. Mugabe must be aware of the big stink at home.

Protest 'against black oppression' – Saturday 4th June: The Vigil salutes the activists who are staging a sixteen-day round-the-clock protest in Harare's Africa Unity Square against Zimbabwe's worsening economic and political situation. The protest was launched on Wednesday when eleven people from the Zimbabwe Activist Alliance and other civil society organisations bedded down in the square. They included Patson Dzamara, brother of missing activist Itai. Lynette Mudehwe, coordinator of the Activist Alliance, called for the rejection of bond notes. Linda Masarira, of our sister organisation ROHR and leader of Zimbabwe Women in Politics Alliance, said the government had shown it did not care for the needs of the people especially women. She complained of 'black oppression'. The Secretary-General of the National Students' Union, Makomborero Haruzivishe, also joined the protest, saying they were tired of watching while the fruits of Zimbabwe's were being squandered by just a few individuals. The Occupy Africa Unity Square facebook page today said they had come under attack early this morning by fourteen men. It said Lynette was grabbed and her ID taken out of her wallet. After inspecting it, they wiped their fingerprints off and returned it, clearly indicating that they were trained. One disabled woman, Naspar Manyau, was indecently assaulted and tipped from her wheelchair towards the stove at which she had been warming her feet. The men grabbed blankets and other possessions and several activists were attacked and injured.

Patson Dzamara on Monday released a photograph of what looked like his brother with his hands tied behind his back and a bandage around his head. He told a news conference: 'Some individuals from within the evil establishment volunteered information regarding who abducted Itai Dzamara, why and where he was kept. The heinous act was executed by state security agents, in particular the military intelligence.' The revived Occupy Africa Unity Square protest, together with Pastor Evan Mawawire's #ThisFlag campaign with its 'hatichada, hadichatya' slogan, reflects widening unrest at the government's failure to turn around the economy. Some fifty civic organisations under the banner of the Zimbabwe National Agreement Platform have also urged the public to reject bond notes. Spokesman Bishop Ancelimo Magaya said that following the illegitimate 2013 elections Zanu PF wanted to reintroduce the Zimbabwe dollar to fund their 2018 election campaign. 'The decision to print bond notes will not help anyone but the political leaders. We are certain they are making massive withdrawals to relocate their wealth outside the country.'

Mugabe strikes at activists – Saturday 11th June: As activists at the Vigil commemorated the fifteenth month since the abduction in Harare of Itai Dzamara, we displayed a new poster – this one condemning the arrest on Wednesday of his brother Patson. He was arrested along with four other activists while taking part in a revived protest in Africa Unity Square originally started by Itai. More were detained later in a clear move to close down the protest, which has been gathering increased support as the economy slips towards the cliff edge. The Facebook page of Occupy Africa Unity Square was defiant, saying the protest would continue: 'We have been attacked, robbed, beaten, detained without charges, arrested on trumped-up charges, denied bail by charging outrageous amounts, smeared in the Herald. All of this for 10 days of activism, for demanding the freedom hard-earned at independence, and subsequently sold down the river'.

Our friends at the Swaziland Vigil confronted the Swaziland High Commissioner, Mrs Dumsile T Sukata, when she was driven away to attend the ceremony of Trooping the Colour. They pushed a poster against a rear window of her car showing a picture of King Mswati III with the wording 'Wanted for Human Rights Abuses'. She desperately tried to close the window blinds.

On Friday we were alarmed to hear that Vigil supporter Emmaculate Tshuma was to be deported that day. She was in a Home Office van outside Heathrow airport. Kenya Airways' telephone lines were overloaded with calls telling them not to take Emmaculate back to Zimbabwe. In the end she was not sent home.

PRESS RELEASE: British medical centre run by Zimbabwean doctor closed – Monday 13th

June:

A medical centre in Nottingham run by a black Zimbabwean doctor has been closed. Zimbabwean exiles have staged repeated demonstrations outside the clinic in protest at the doctor's violent seizure of a white-owned farm in Zimbabwe. In February the Zimbabwe Vigil protest group presented a petition to 10 Downing Street calling on the government to consider revoking the British citizenship of Dr Sylvester Nyatsuro, who runs the Willows Medical Centre with his wife Veronica. Dr Nyatsuro has lived in the UK for 15 years and lives with his family in a large and luxurious house nearby valued at around £750,000. They say that they were simply allocated the farm by the Zimbabwe government and denied any nepotism was involved. But photographs emerged showing the couple socializing with Grace Mugabe. The Vigil also drew the matter to the attention of the National Health Service which has responsibility for the clinic. Last week inspectors from the Care Quality Commission visited the centre and took immediate action to close it until further notice. Patients are being directed to other practices. The UK government says the question of Dr Nyatsuro's citizenship is being looked at by the Home Office. The Vigil argues that they are clearly Mugabe supporters and citizenship could have been obtained by means of fraud or false representation. The Nyatsuros have no known farming experience.

SADC save Zimbabwe – Saturday 18th June: With Zimbabwe's army going unpaid while the government tries to find the money, the Vigil delivered a petition to the Botswana High Commission in London on Tuesday calling for the help of the Southern African Development Community to avert disaster in Zimbabwe. A Vigil delegation was given a courteous reception at the High Commission which accepted a letter to pass on to President Ian Khama as Chair of SADC.

Our letter said: 'In the last 15 years or so Zimbabweans have increasingly looked to Botswana as a model of good governance. We have been comforted that Botswana could always be relied on to speak the truth to President Mugabe – even if it was a lone voice. We are grateful for your patience in the face of the influx of Zimbabwean refugees and other problems we have caused you as our country's economy collapsed. You have been a true friend and we will not forget your solidarity with our suffering people. Your predecessor, former President Festus Mogae, was quoted by the UN recently as saying: 'Sovereignty has limits like any other right. A leader cannot kill and harass his people and hide behind sovereignty. A true leader does not kill but protects his people. We still have leaders in Africa who think they are indispensable, larger than life and more important than their countries. That must stop. If a leader loses control, the world will and should intervene to save the people.' We of the Zimbabwe Vigil have been protesting outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London for the past 14 years demanding an end to human rights violations and calling for free and fair elections. We fear that our country could be torn apart as President Mugabe clings to office into his nineties with no designated successor. In your closing months as Chair of the Southern African Development Community we submit to you the following petition calling for SADC intercession to avert disaster. The petition has been signed by thousands of people from all over the world who have passed by our Vigil outside the

Embassy.

'To the Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), President Ian Khama of Botswana We wish to alert you to alarming threats by the military in Zimbabwe to employ violence against people opposed to the Zanu PF regime. The threats come amid worsening splits in the party and rising popular outrage at the demolition of the homes of the poor and the imposition of pre-paid water meters for an unreliable supply. The Commander of the Presidential Guard Brigadier-General Anselem Sanyatwe has threatened force to stop ousted Vice-President Joice Mujuru from opposing Mugabe. He told his troops 'Professionalism is over . . . Zanu PF should rule forever'. The national army commander Lieutenant-General Phillip Sibanda later warned that 'the Zanu PF axe' could be wielded again. You will be aware that Zimbabwe has recently been judged the worst governed country in SADC. Bad governance has destroyed the economy, reducing people to desperation while the ruling elite drive past in their luxury cars from their mansions to the expensive restaurants. There is growing resentment. Provocative moves by the military could cause an explosion of anger. We call on SADC to prepare to intervene to stop a meltdown.'

We remember how SADC facilitated the government of national unity after the violent 2008 elections, arresting catastrophe. It is not for Zimbabweans in the diaspora to prescribe what any solution should be but we want a government that observes the rule of law and will conduct free and fair elections. We believe this is the key to the restoration of Zimbabwe.

Zanu PF's London sales pitch – Saturday 25th June: Exiled Zimbabweans are to picket a conference in London on 5th July at which Zanu PF will try to persuade the world that it is reforming and should be bailed out with Western loans. The meeting comes as the bankrupt regime hopes to convince the International Monetary Fund that it is serious about implementing the constitution adopted in 2013. The Vigil will be outside the meeting to tell any prospective investors the real reasons why Zimbabwe has run out of money and why the world should be sceptical about any assurances given by the likes of Finance Minister Chinamasa, Minister of Macro Economic Planning and Investment Promotion Obert Mpofu (unaccountably one of the richest men in Zimbabwe) and Mike Bimha, Minister of Industry and Commerce. They are listed to speak at the conference along with Reserve Bank governor John Mangudya. The meeting has been organised by Africa Confidential, a fortnightly newsletter covering politics and economics in Africa. Explaining the conference, Africa Confidential says Zimbabwe 'is on the brink of finalising an historic deal which will end a decade and half of sanctions and unlock substantial new funds for economic growth and development'. This comment indicates from which perspective the organisers are coming.

Contrary to Africa Confidential's assumption, the MDC T MP Eddie Cross says the sudden announcement that Zimbabwe is introducing a new local currency (bond notes) has exposed the real state of affairs and the IMF realises it has been deceived and the regime's liabilities are much greater than previously revealed. As an indication of Zanu PF's intentions, Mr Cross cites a new bill tabled in Parliament this week to reinstate the powers that the new constitution had stripped from the Minister of Local Government to suspend and dismiss the elected leadership of local authorities. He says 'In preparation for the next election – expected in 2018 – the minister (who is also the Political Commissar of Zanu PF) has been instructed to cripple and even remove as many MDC T controlled Councils as he can'. Mr Cross continues: 'It clearly demonstrates that Zanu PF has no intention at all of implementing the new constitution. Secondly, it shows that they know that they cannot win a free and fair election and are therefore strengthening their defences against the MDC. The voters roll is still under military control and is managed, not by the Electoral Commission as provided in the constitution, but by a secretive company called Nikuv from Israel. The Minister of Local Government has announced his intention of settling up to 250 000 members of the "youth" wing of his party in urban areas using urban and state land and allocating these people small plots at virtually no cost to themselves. 'You do not need an imagination to understand that the programme of fear and coercion, and the control given by the fear of being removed from your allocated stands, is now being extended to all urban centres and the newly settled people will be used for political purposes and controlled violence against all opponents.'

Mr Cross concludes: 'What does this all indicate? Very clearly it says that the leopard that has been courting the IMF and the international community in the past three years, has not changed its spots in any way. The consequences for the country are disastrous. They are again taking money out of our accounts and replacing it with a worthless form of virtual money. Their economic policies are destroying what little is left of a once diversified and sophisticated economy. They are clearly not going to allow a democratic election any time soon and the wholesale theft of resources by a tiny, military and civilian clique is continuing. I am afraid that the days of trying to whitewash this leopard and to persuade it to change its ways are over. We have no choice but to take matters into our own hands and effect real change in our country. The best solution would be an internationally supervised election without a voters roll as soon as possible. If this is not facilitated by the region, then the streets will have to make the required decisions. We the citizens of this country, really have no choice.'

Mugabe's vultures descend on London – Saturday 2nd July: Mugabe's Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa has admitted that Zimbabwe is broke. 'Right now we have nothing', he said in France on his way to London. The Vigil has called on supporters to demonstrate outside the Royal Institute of International Affairs on Monday at which Chinamasa is to speak and at a conference in the City of London on Tuesday to be addressed by Chinamasa and other representatives of the regime including Mangudya governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.

We will hand out the following leaflet at Chatham House: **No to Mugabe's lies:** Exiled Zimbabweans are picketing this meeting at which Mugabe's Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa will try to persuade you that the ruling Zanu PF party is reforming and should be bailed out with Western loans and investment. He is part of a larger Zanu PF delegation touring Europe in a desperate attempt to raise money. The meeting comes as the bankrupt regime hopes to convince the International Monetary Fund that it is serious about implementing the constitution adopted in 2013.

The Zimbabwe Vigil is here to explain the real reasons why Zimbabwe has run out of money and why the world should be sceptical about any assurances given by the likes of Chinamasa. We draw your attention to this recent article by the Times correspondent in Harare.

'Shopkeepers struggle with 'multicurrency' Mugabonomics – Jan Raath, Harare: 27/06/2016.

Having had triple heart bypass surgery two years ago, Stelio Haralambos, who runs a little store, ought to avoid stress. He came to what was Rhodesia in 1966 as a barber from Lesbos but switched to running a shop.

Mr Haralambos has endured a series of economic crises since independence in 1980 but nothing quite like the one now. After Zimbabwe's currency vanished in hyperinflation in 2009, the US dollar became the official money. But seven years later, and with the country importing twice as much as it exports since President Mugabe destroyed agriculture and industry, there is a shortage of greenbacks, so the central bank has introduced a 'multi currency' system. Customers entering Mr Haralambos's store for a morning scud, Zimbabwe's soupy traditional beer, can offer payment in up to seven currencies — US dollars, sterling, Chinese yuan, Japanese yen, Australian dollars, South African rand, Indian rupees and the Botswanan pula. In the store the day's exchange rates will not have arrived so Mr Haralambos has to do the calculations. You can just about pick up the fibrillation of his heart from the other side of the scratched old glass-topped counter.

The banks have tried to ration cash at ATMs but the daily withdrawal limit dwindles steadily. Slow, winding queues are the order of the day. It is the latest absurdity created by Mugabonomics. Other countries borrow but Zimbabwe cannot. Mr Mugabe once borrowed unsustainably and, worse, he doesn't pay back.

Country people, who long for the days of the Zimdollar, have to deal with notes carrying Chinese or Japanese characters. And the township con-artists revel in the opportunity to profit from the confusion. It gets worse. The central bank governor has announced that he will introduce a "bond note", equal to the US dollar, in October. Economists are trying to find out if it will be currency, money, legal tender, negotiable instrument, treasury bill or promissory note — but the governor is not saying. The only conclusion economists can reach is that it is a piece of paper.

The reaction has been a collective nationwide, "No." The bond note is seen as a government attempt to solve the cash crisis by issuing another form of the Zimdollar, whose value will plunge instantly on appearance. No one has forgotten the instant impoverishment caused by

hyperinflation as the value of hard-earned wages, income and investments shrank. Police do their best to boost national outrage. They have become a force of uniformed highwaymen. Anywhere you go, you risk being stopped at a roadblock. On the 275-mile stretch between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls last week, there were 16. At each one police search for faults to fine you — for not having the latest stamp on your fire extinguisher indicating its last service, for example. Zimbabwe must be the only country where you can be fined \$20 for a dirty car. I hide my cash so I can say that I can't pay.

Government coffers are nearly empty. Civil servants' pay days have been repeatedly postponed since late last year and the 40,000-strong army, as well as the police and prison service, were told last week that pay days had been pushed back by two weeks.

This week the government was due to present its plan to repay \$1.8 billion to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, which would, theoretically, have allowed Zimbabwe to start borrowing again. However, Algeria, which was to have lent \$1 billion, has backed off. Not that Mr Mugabe seems to care. He said last week that the cash crisis, "is a temporary problem which should be behind us soon". Mr Haralambos would best be advised to retire to Lesbos.'

PRESS RELEASE: Chinamasa besieged in London – Monday 4th July: Zimbabwean Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa was besieged in London by angry Zimbabwean exiles and had to be rescued by a van load of police. Chinamasa was speaking at the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House on a desperate visit to Europe to try to raise money for the bankrupt Zanu PF regime. Protestors from the Zimbabwe Vigil and its sister organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe picketed Chatham House with posters reading: 'No to Mugabe's lies', 'Don't prop up the Mugabe regime', 'Don't lend money to thieves' and 'Zimbabweans reject odious debt'. It became apparent that Chinamasa and his companions were afraid to come out and face the music. The demonstrators deterred an attempt to exit from a side door of Chatham House and eventually the police arrived and provided a safe corridor for Chinamasa and his friends to access the Zimbabwean Ambassador's car amid jeers from protestors, fired up by messages from home of mounting unrest in all urban areas. We were not impressed by the Chatham House official who refused to allow our supporter David Wilkins to sit on the steps. David is blind and has hearing difficulties. Part of his condition is that he has weak ankles. They said he should sit in the park across the road but he wanted to stay with us.

PRESS RELEASE 1: Chinamasa confronted again – Tuesday 5th July: Zimbabwean demonstrators confronted Chinamasa for the second time in two days when he arrived for a money-raising conference in London on Tuesday. Chinamasa was driven up at about 8 am to a side door of the conference venue in the financial district. If he thought he would evade Vigil protesters he was mistaken. Vigil co-ordinator Fungayi Mabhunu spotted ZIM 1, the Ambassador's car, and when Chinamasa got out Fungayi demanded to know what he had done with the \$15 billion Mugabe says has disappeared from diamond revenues. 'He was really shaken', said Fungayi. The Vigil was congratulated on its work by the former coalition's finance minister Tendai Biti. 'Well done guys you are doing a good job', he said when he arrived for the

conference. He was happy to be photographed with us and took a bundle of our leaflets to hand out at the meeting. Congratulations also came from Zimbabwean journalist Peta Thorneycroft who was covering the conference which Zanu PF hopes will help get loans and investment to make up for the \$15 billion it has looted.

PRESS RELEASE 2: Chinamasa trapped in London – Tuesday 5th July: Zimbabwean demonstrators lay down in the road outside the conference in London addressed by Chinamasa preventing him from leaving for more than an hour. The minister had hoped to escape in an ordinary taxi after his arrival in the ambassador's car ZIM 1 was ambushed by Zimbabwean exiles. The minister's taxi was backed up by other cars so was unable to escape the one way road and he had to wait until the demonstrators were lifted bodily by the police to clear the way. The demonstration at the conference began before 8 am and ended at about 7 pm. Chinamasa was expected back for the last session but did not reappear. Sources at the conference told the Vigil that Chinamasa had been challenged by Professor Stephen Chan of the School of Oriental and African Studies: 'Why are you begging money from the British government?' Tendai Biti, the former coalition's finance minister, is said to have told Chinamasa bluntly that he was lying. Vigil supporters and others from ZAPU and MDC agreed to hold another demonstration outside the Embassy on Wednesday in response to the #ThisFlag call 'Shut Down Zimbabwe'. #ThisFlag is calling for everyone to stay at home but in our case we won't stay at home but will be outside the Embassy in solidarity with our families at home.

West to rescue Mugabe? – Saturday 9th July: □ The West seems hell-bent on saving the beleaguered Zanu PF regime – in spite of a Zanu PF minister accusing Western embassies of fomenting the mounting unrest. The West apparently believes that there will be regional chaos if the regime collapses. Behind the re-engagement process between the West and Zimbabwe is the International Monetary Fund which has been persuaded by Zimbabwe's promises of economic reforms and says the country is capable of quick growth if it can only get some cash. The word is that new loans will only come after reforms have been made but the Vigil can't see how Zanu PF can undertake reforms. For instance, would this involve a 50% cut in the government wage bill as recommended? We do not believe this can be delivered as it would undermine Zanu PF's support base. Many others are equally sceptical. The Zimbabwean economist Tony Hawkins says 'the IMF is being taken for a ride'. An article in the latest edition of the UK's Economist headlined 'Bailing out bandits' makes clear its view that a lifeline for Mugabe is 'a bad idea'. It says 'The West is pinning its hopes on those they see as 'reformist' elements in Zanu PF. Vice President Mnangagwa, despite his genocidal history, is seen as one of them, along with Finance Minister Chinamasa, who made a poor impression at a money-raising conference in London's financial district on Tuesday.'

The Zimbabwean academic Alex Magaisa was at the conference and says Mugabe and Zanu PF can't believe their luck at the prospect of new loans. He says Western countries must not

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2016

Written by Administrator

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delude themselves into thinking that they are dealing with a different creature or that it is in the interests of ordinary Zimbabweans. Dr Magaisa said that as the conference was taking place the songs and chants by Vigil protestors outside could be heard, prompting laughter when Chinamasa claimed 'political stability'. Former Finance Minister Tendai Biti said Zimbabwe needed a national transitional authority to stabilise the situation and arrange new elections. The MDC T has called on the Southern African Development Community to intervene as it did after the violent 2008 elections. This echoes the call by the Vigil, which last month delivered a petition to Botswana, the current Chair of SADC.

The Vigil received several messages of congratulations including one from Eddie Cross MP. □ 'Thank you Team Zimbabwe once again for doing your country proud – I think we sunk this ship well and truly'.

PRESS RELEASE: Enough is enough – Wednesday 13th July: Zimbabwean exiles demonstrated outside the Embassy today in support of a two-day #ShutdownZimbabwe called by Pastor Evan Mawarire of the #ThisFlag protest movement. Demonstrators – some draped in the Zimbabwe flag – demanded that charges be dropped against Pastor Mawarire, who was arrested in Harare on Tuesday accused of inciting violence. One poster read: '36 years of freedom: no free speech, no freedom. Free Evan Mawarire'. About 150 people were there to hear a demand that there should be no western aid to prop up the Mugabe regime. The demand was made by Ephraim Tapa who said: 'We want Mugabe to go and a transitional authority to organise free and fair elections monitored by the international community'.

PRESS RELEASE: Standing still is suicide – Thursday 14th July: The second day of solidarity demonstrations outside the Embassy was one of the biggest gatherings held by the Vigil in 14 years of campaigning for an end to human rights abuses and free and fair elections. We were joined by gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell famous for his attempt to make a citizen's arrest of Mugabe on visits to London in 1999 and Brussels in 2001 when he was savagely beaten by Mugabe's bodyguards. We were also joined by a white Zimbabwean family who brought a striking poster reading 'Moving forward is perilous, moving backwards is cowardice, staying still is suicide'.

Parallel Universe – Saturday 16th July: The Zimbabwean diaspora was interested to hear from Home Affairs Minister Ignatius Chombo that we are being used by Western countries to promote alarm, despondency and unrest in the motherland where all is 'calm and peaceful'. Chombo is cushioned by his vast wealth. He seems to be living in a parallel universe inhabited only by the Mugabe mafia. They appear to be too far gone to see that it is the state that they have created that promotes 'alarm, despondency and unrest' – a state that can charge a pastor

with treason for wearing the Zimbabwe flag and working for nation building without hate. Whatever the delusions of the dying regime, the bottom line is that it has run out of money. Once again the army has been told that they cannot be paid on time. Eddie Cross, the MDC T MP, says the crunch appears to be imminent. 'The regime has its back to the wall in Harare and I see no way out . . . The regime has falsified the financial position of the state and the IMF talks have collapsed leaving the regime in Harare totally reliant on the international community for emergency support.'

Veneer peels – Saturday 23rd July: As the Zanu PF regime crumbles its veneer of constitutionalism is rapidly peeling off. Any opposition to Mugabe is now seen as treason. Even the regime's storm troops – the war veterans – have now been accused of being traitors for questioning Mugabe. The accusation came from the top civil servant in the veterans' ministry, retired Brigadier-General Asher Tapfunaneyi. He was responding to a statement by the War Veterans' Association after a 7-hour leadership meeting. The statement accused Mugabe of entrenching dictatorial tendencies, egocentrism and misrule and said it would not support his re-election campaign. The war veterans criticised the oppressive attitude shown towards peaceful protesters. This highhanded unconstitutional behaviour is shown by its treatment of Linda Masarira of the Vigil's sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe who was arrested on 6th July during the peaceful shutdown protest and has since been detained in Chikurubi prison. Linda came to public attention as a member of the Occupy Africa Unity Square protest when she memorably said 'We are sick and tired of being sick and tired'. She appeared in Mbare Magistrate's Court on Friday and was remanded in custody until Tuesday 26th

July although her lawyer pointed out that her constitutional rights had already been violated by the prosecution's delay in bringing her to court.

Demonstration in support of Linda Masarira – Tuesday 26th July: ROHR and Vigil protesters demonstrated outside the Embassy today in support of Linda Masarira who was appearing in court in Mbare on trumped up charges. She was further remanded in custody until 11th August. The demonstrators rang the bell and slipped in posters to the surprised doorman. The Ambassador's car ZIM 1 was parked outside with a window slightly open. The protesters pushed the remaining posters into the car before they left.

'Charming' psychopath – Saturday 30th July: The 'charming' side of Mugabe was not in evidence when he addressed a splinter group of 'war veterans', padded out with bussed-in youths, at a hurriedly-arranged rally to denounce war veteran leaders who last week issued a statement condemning his regime. 'Charming' was the word used by a former British ambassador, Deborah Bronnert, some years back, after presenting her credentials to Mugabe.

She is not alone in being taken in by the psychopathic megalomaniac. The Vigil tired of hearing MDC ministers in the bogus coalition spouting the same deluded line. 'Charming' Mugabe certainly was not when he outlined the punishment he had in mind for the 'treasonous' war veteran leaders being rounded up by security agents.

'We will punish them in a very big way', he said, going on to recall how holes had been dug for enemies during the liberation struggle. 'We kept them underground like rats . . . it is the same thing we are going to do here in Independent Zimbabwe'. Mugabe added that the police belonged to Zanu PF and would be used to crush any protests by his enemies, especially church leaders dabbling in politics. 'The police are ours and they shall see to it that these small party protesters are thrown in jail so they can taste the food there . . .'

It appears that many police share this view. A contingent of police recruits said Mugabe was 'the real angel Gabriel sent by God to deliver Zimbabwe and Africa'. They pledged their support for Mugabe at a passing out parade after a year of indoctrination at Morris Depot in Harare. 'Like Jesus Christ, who was crucified by a people whom He saved, you have innocently grappled with all forms of persecution', they declared. 'Because of you, Zimbabwe is a land of peace and tranquillity, equity, equality, freedom, fairness, honesty and the dignity of hard work. You have been attacked for championing the cause of the people, justice and equality, for denouncing racial segregation, immorality, corruption, human rights abuse and violence'

As war veteran leaders joined protesters in jail and #ThisFlag pastor Evan Mawarire fled into exile, the Vigil believes Mugabe now has little chance of securing British support in his desperate attempt to persuade the International Monetary Fund to bail out his regime. The Vigil believes the 'charm' of the psychopathic megalomaniac has now faded like the allure of his idols Kim Jong-Il, Chairman Mao, Stalin and Hitler.

Vigil petitions UN for transitional authority – Saturday 6th August: Exiled Zimbabweans are to appeal to the United Nations to prepare to intervene in Zimbabwe as the bankrupt regime teeters on the verge of violent unrest. The Vigil today launched the following petition to the UN Secretary-General:

With mounting unrest in Zimbabwe, we urge you to appoint a Special Representative to prepare the ground for a UN Transitional Authority to take over from the failed Mugabe regime. We look to the Special Representative to initiate comprehensive negotiations so that the UN Transitional Authority can assume control of Zimbabwe's administrative structures – foreign affairs, defence, security, finance and communications – to ensure a level playing field conducive for credible national elections.

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2016

Written by Administrator

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The petition is the fruit of the late Vigil supporter Clifford Mashiri, an academic and former diplomat whose funeral took place in London on Tuesday. Clifford said 'Arguably, governance would change in Zimbabwe by virtue of a UN Security Council resolution giving mandate to the UN Transitional Authority in Zimbabwe (UNTAZ) which will only withdraw after free and fair elections have been conducted.' In recent months there have been proposals from various quarters in Zimbabwe for some kind of transitional authority and – in the absence of any initiative by the Southern African Development Community – the Vigil believes Clifford's ideas offer a way forward.

Supporters might have seen an article on the dodgy Zimeye website in which the Vigil was criticised for not allowing Stendrick Zvorwadza to address us last week. Our refusal to give a hearing to this charlatan was because he still pretends to be the leader of ROHR and has yet to account for £2,000 we entrusted to him in 2008 to hand over to an orphanage we were supporting in Zimbabwe, as well as computers, phones and cameras for the ROHR office in Harare.

Another demonstration for Linda – Thursday 11th August: About 20 people gathered singing and drumming outside the Embassy today to demonstrate in support of ROHR member Linda Masarira, who is facing trumped up charges in Harare. During the demonstration the protesters were angered to hear that Linda had been further remanded in custody until 25th

August, unable to get home to her children. It is reported that 'Lynda looked visibly sick when she appeared in court today because she is allegedly being denied access to medication.

End of road for Mugabe – Saturday 13th August: President Mugabe was symbolically put on trial at the Vigil and ordered to leave office for crimes against the people and economy of Zimbabwe. He had earlier been 'arrested' by human rights activist Peter Tatchell, who had unsuccessfully tried to make a citizen's arrest of Mugabe in London in 1999 and Brussels in 2001. Mugabe was brought to the Vigil along with first lady Grace and the governor of the Reserve Bank John Mangudya from the south coast resort of Brighton, where the three had gone incognito to get treatment under the National Health Service and apply for state benefits.

A group of Vigil / ROHR supporters and other exiled Zimbabweans left Brighton for London with the prisoners on Friday and walked 30 miles before camping overnight on a farm. On Saturday they continued for a further ten miles, singing Zimbabwean songs as they passed the Houses of Parliament and 10 Downing Street before joining the Vigil, where Mugabe was handed over to a judge outside the Embassy. He was found guilty of treason and offered a pistol so he could make an honourable exit. But, cunning as always, he collapsed against the Embassy door to

claim diplomatic immunity. The Vigil has alerted the British authorities to examine all Zimbabwean diplomatic baggage very carefully, looking particularly for a 92 year old with corns and blisters from a long walk.

The judge released Grace and Mangudya to the local social services. It is understood that both have applied for asylum on the grounds of diminished responsibility caused by stupidity. Latest word is that Grace has asked the UK immigration authorities for training as a typist and Mangudya has asked for a UK government loan to study arithmetic and economics at O level.

Final looting spree? – Saturday 20th August: It looks like the Mugabe regime is preparing for a final looting spree to mop up the dollars remaining in the economy. Despite earlier denials, Reserve Bank Governor Mangudya, has now admitted that the bond notes piling up at the bank will be used to pay wages. It will be a windfall for the Mugabe cronies.

Whether Mugabe himself really knows what is happening is doubtful. His physical condition is now so poor he has had to pull out of a trip to Ghana where he was to receive a Lifetime Africa Achievement Award – testament only to the ignorance of those who awarded it. Probably Mugabe still believes in the fantasy world of the Herald, which said this week Zimbabwe is poised for an economic take-off – reminiscent of the Zambian space ship of a few years ago which ended up in the branches of the nearest tree.

The regime faces its biggest challenge so far if a massive protest in Harare planned by the combined opposition parties goes ahead on Friday. The riot police showed on Wednesday that they mean business when a demonstration in Harare against the introduction of bond notes ended with blood on the streets. Pastor Evan Mawarire of #ThisFlag movement saw the brutal face of the regime himself and fled the country. He said he had been warned to leave or be killed. His wife had been threatened with rape and its clear his children were also in danger.

We at the Vigil have some information of our own about the police reign of terror. Here's a message from a member of our sister organisation ROHR: *'Hi guys. Thanx so much for the caring messages I got during my dice with state security over a nothing. They tried to frame me on very silly allegations that I was inciting violence and causing public disorder. They authored very derogatory papers with my name, phone number and address at the bottom and threw them around at night. They were shockingly pasted on walls at ZANU PF offices and buildings around the offices. Was called to a CID office where there were CIOs as well. Was heavily abused verbally and threatened when they were profiling me. No charges were laid*

against me but was warned that they will come back for me when they are finalising their paperwork. Though a bit disturbed psychologically, that's what they wanted, I am fine physically and unsafely at home and unmoved. The guys are cunning and very good at intimidating and threatening. Your messages and calls really raised my spirits and got me to realise that there is a bigger family out there.'

Demonstration for Linda – Thursday 25th August: Vigil supporters demonstrated outside the Embassy again when Linda Masarira of ROHR appeared in court in connection with political activism. Linda has been in jail for the past two months and was again remanded in custody until Wednesday 31st August. Linda is in poor health and has been denied bail despite having young children.

Topsy-turvy land – Saturday 27th August 2016: The Mugabe 'official' view of the chaos in Harare on Friday is that it was the work of paid demonstrators for the imperialist West aiming at regime change. And, as everyone has learnt from the Herald, regime change is un-African. This is not just a Zanu-PF attitude. Zuma, mired in corruption, spouts the same mantra. In fact there are all too many African leaders who view political opposition and any threat to their position as treasonous, justifying a change in the constitution to make this impossible. In the topsy-turvy land of Zimbabwe, it was as if the demonstrators were the ones wielding the batons, indiscriminately spraying teargas around and blasting people with water cannons or worse. One would have thought it was the police who had been ordered by the High Court to stop a peaceful demonstration instead of being specifically told 'not to interfere'. If nothing else, Friday's events show graphically how law and the constitution count for nothing in Mugabeland.

In a vivid account, the opposition MP Eddie Cross describes how he was on his way to take part in the protest when he was warned that it was dangerous to go any further. 'I proceeded to the collection point through rock strewn roads, burning tyres and saw running battles between young people and the police. I saw water cannons in action with blue dye in the water and one machine putting out a fire . . . I left the area and drove to Parliament to wash my face and get the tear gas out of my eyes. Then I tried to go back but was completely blocked by cars fleeing the battles in the central business district. Subsequently the street battles raged over much of the city, business closed down and the streets deserted. The army was deployed and helicopters were put up to monitor the people. Was there any need for this? Absolutely not! I had participated in four previous marches and had not felt for one instance any threat or danger. Just cheerful thousands celebrating their right to protest at the state of crisis through which we are all living. The violence was instigated by the police who were totally responsible for what followed'.

The Care Quality Commission has condemned a medical centre in Nottingham which was closed in June after the Vigil staged a series of protests outside. The clinic was run by Zimbabwean doctor Sylvester Nyatsuro and his wife Veronica, who earlier this year violently seized a farm in Zimbabwe owned by a white couple. The Commission described the clinic as chaotic and noted that there was a culture of fear with staff being reprimanded and shouted at by management. It said an unregistered health care assistant had been passed off as a doctor at the clinic and allowed to carry out examinations. Dr Nyatsuro has lost his job for which he was paid more than £100,000 a year. It is not known how much his wife earned as the practice manager.

Unlamented dictator – Saturday 3rd September: The news leaked out quickly despite the security clampdown. It always does. After all, it was not unexpected. The old tyrant had been felled by a stroke: probably dead, but anyway finished. It had been a long time coming. No one was sure what would happen next. Who would take over? There were several obvious candidates but which one would move first? Fresh in the memory was the sudden death of Malawi's President Mutharika in 2012. As the Vigil recorded at the time, his corpse was flown to South Africa, ostensibly for medical treatment but really just to buy time for his inner circle to work out what to do. This tyrant left a difficult legacy. Long decades of brutal oppression to elevate him to the status of a near deity. There was talk of opponents being boiled. The country was ruined. Well at last he is gone. The official announcement when it came was brief. President Karimov is dead, the only President Uzbekistan has had since independence. The Uzbek government described him as a great statesman who had brought 'peace, stability, prosperity and progress'. Will we soon be hearing similar nonsense about Mugabe?

After a week of frenzied police violence against demonstrators and passers-by in Harare, the Zimbabwe Action Forum met after the Vigil to discuss the worsening situation. Ephraim Tapa, who has just returned from a clandestine visit, spoke of the worsening corruption he found. He said he had been told that euthanasia was being practiced in hospitals on those too poor to pay for life-saving treatment.

Deluded Mugabe – Saturday 10th September: A thousand years ago the Danish ruler Cnut became King of England. He is remembered today for sitting on a throne on the seashore, surrounded by courtiers, and ordering the tide to retreat. King Canute, as he is better known, was not mad. He was making the point that – however powerful he was – some things were beyond him. Mugabe's rebuke to the judiciary for allowing demonstrations against his misrule illustrated his belief that the constitution is his to interpret. He is the law. He is the state. His powers are unlimited. The Vigil waits with interest to see how he reacts when he wakes up and hears about Chinamasa's sacking of 25,000 state workers, cuts in pay and allowances – and even scrapping the sacred bonuses. Last year Mugabe ordered the tide to retreat – and Chinamasa duly complied and restored bonuses. This year there simply isn't the money to do

this again

Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu who appeared at the Vigil in Mugabe mask and judge's wig to demonstrate with the help of a 'button stick' the reality of power in Zimbabwe. He was surrounded by Vigil supporters carrying posters saying: 'Chief Injustice Mugabe', 'Mugabe says protest is treason' and 'Mugabe: I am the law'.

Protest outside Embassy - Friday 16th September: over 40 exiled Zimbabweans gathered at the Embassy to demand 'Mugabe must go' in support of protests back home. Flowers were laid at the door of the Embassy for Itai Dzamara who was abducted and disappeared 18 months ago.

Mugabe a 'walking corpse' – Saturday 17th September: The Zimbabwean opposition MP Eddie Cross says the international community is backing Vice-President Mnangagwa to take over from 'walking corpse' Mugabe in the next few months. Mr Cross was speaking at the UK Parliament on Thursday during a trip to Europe. He said South Africa was backing a road map for change in Zimbabwe – a road map which had also been embraced by the US, the UK and European Union and even China. The plan envisaged the immediate retirement of Mugabe to be replaced by Mnangagwa who would be tasked with managing comprehensive reforms to ensure a level playing field allowing free and fair elections in 2018. Mr Cross said Mnangagwa had the support of the military and the principal power brokers in Zimbabwe. He said financial support for Zimbabwe would be dependent on reforms being implemented and the diaspora of 4.7 million being allowed to vote. All voting would be on the simple basis of an identification document. He added that he was confident MDC T would get 70% of the vote.

Ten Vigil supporters were at the meeting in a parliamentary committee room overlooking the Thames. They were pleased when Mr Cross mentioned the Vigil at the meeting, saying 'we are really proud of you guys – how you have struggled all these years'. Mr Cross was invited to attend the Vigil, where he was presented with a Vigil cap in appreciation of his long and courageous service to Zimbabwe. But Vigil supporters expressed their reservations about trusting Mnangagwa, who was implicated in the Gukurahundi genocide of the 1980s. Mr Cross was told the Vigil's view is that the United Nations should be asked to help set up a transitional authority, as outlined in our current petition. The Vigil produced its own version of the new Mugabe statue displayed in Zimbabwe with Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask demonstrating how the 'walking corpse' was still exercising his malignant influence – off on another tour leaving the country in flames after scrapping Chinamasa's latest attempt to satisfy the international financial world by reigning in government spending.

Pinocchio paper – Saturday 24th September: Botswana's President Ian Khama deserves the Nobel prize for doing the unthinkable: telling an African leader to step down because he has passed his sell-by date. The Herald's reaction is that it is un-African for a fellow African president to criticise Mugabe. So it responds by calling President Khama 'queer'. That really is 'un-African' . . . The Vigil, on behalf of Zimbabweans, apologises to President Khama, who has helped to make his country an island of good governance and prosperity in an ocean of corruption and inefficiency. President Khama will no doubt already know that Mugabe's mouthpiece the Herald is like Pinocchio, the puppet in the children's story whose nose grows longer every time he tells a lie. So he will not be surprised if the Herald's nose is now so long as to stretch all the way to Botswana.

We believe the Herald would be a worthy winner of the Ig Nobel Prize awarded every year at Harvard university as an alternative to the Nobel Prize. After all, this year an award went to a team for their psychology paper 'From Junior to Senior Pinocchio; a Cross-Sectional Life Span Investigation of Deception'. They were chosen for 'asking a thousand liars how often they lie and for deciding whether to believe those answers'. In fact, the Herald would qualify for two Ig Nobel awards. A second one went to Japanese researchers 'for investigating whether things looked different when you bend over and view them between your legs'. The Ig awards for the Herald would be suitable (and timely) – they carry a cash prize of a Zimbabwean ten trillion dollar note.

Who's the tortoise now? – Saturday 1st October: On Friday Botswana celebrated 50 years of independence. There has been a transformation. In 1966 it was the poor relation in the region. Some of us at the Vigil recall travelling through Botswana by train about this time, making lengthy unexplained stops in the middle of nowhere, only for someone to suddenly emerge from the semi-desert with a tortoise for sale.

Today the tables have been turned. It's poor Zimbabweans who emerge everywhere to sell handicrafts, wild fruit and vegetables, simcards, second hand clothes . . . soon to be joined by US dollars when the threatened bond notes appear. Far from being the backward relatives the Botswana now have a much higher standard of living than Zimbabweans though their country has far fewer resources. The Gross Domestic Product per head of population – a standard measure of wealth – was \$953 for Zimbabweans in 2013. The figure for Botswana was \$7,315.

Why has this happened? Mugabe blames it on sanctions but the Vigil believes the simple answer is Mugabe and his rapacious elite. Robert Guest of *The Economist* wrote in his 2004 book, *The Shackled Continent*, 'In

the last 35 years, Botswana's economy has grown faster than any other in the world. Yet cabinet ministers have not awarded themselves mansions and helicopters — and even the president has been seen doing his own shopping.' Botswana was described today as 'an island of peace, tranquillity and wisdom' by the writer Alexander McCall Smith in a BBC radio interview. McCall Smith has made Botswana famous abroad with wry tales of Precious Ramotswa and her No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. If only he would turn his attention to Zimbabwe, where he was born. How about this plot for a farce: a High Court judge who overturns an illegal police ban on demonstrations is accused by the Chief Justice of having taken a bribe, police hover in the background as Zanu PF youth provoke violence in Harare to be blamed on demonstrators, a student leader is arrested for holding a poster asking for jobs at a graduation ceremony, people are threatened with jail for displaying the Zimbabwean flag, people abducted, tortured . . .

Too far-fetched? Not in Zimbabwe. The Mugabe regime is what the Japanese observer Ken Yamamoto would describe as a fence post tortoise: 'When you're driving down a country road and you come across a fence post with a tortoise balanced on top, that's a fence post tortoise. You know he didn't get up there by himself, he doesn't belong up there, he doesn't know what to do while he's up there, he's elevated beyond his ability to function, and you just wonder what kind of dumb arse put him up there to begin with.'

We were glad that ROHR activist Linda Masarira has been released at last after being incarcerated for nearly three months on trumped up charges.

Unrepentant Mujuru – Saturday 8th October: There was no breast-beating or wringing of hands when Zimbabwe People First leader Joice Mujuru made a wooden pitch for respectability at the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House in London on Thursday. Of the abuses committed during her 34 years in the Mugabe inner circle she confessed to nothing, admitting only 'guilt by association'. Certainly no repentance. She had been kicked out as Vice President, she said, because she was a 'moderate' who favoured restoring relations with the West. (Not, as Mugabe alleged, being a 'witch'.)

But it was nevertheless a bit magical that Mrs Mujuru arrived at Chatham House in what we were told was the Ambassador's car – an unheard of courtesy to an 'opposition' figure (let alone a 'witch' of the West). What was equally surprising was the small group of prosperous-looking Mujuru supporters with sparkling new banners gathered outside the front door. Surprising because Vigil supporters – perhaps less well-dressed and suspected of being less welcoming – were herded behind a metal barricade on the far side of the road, watched over by two police officers.

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On this occasion a few Vigil supporters were allowed into Chatham House to hear what was going on. They say Mujuru made all the right noises (reading from a prepared script): ‘We want a government responsive to the needs of the citizens . . . there is a generational disconnect . . . country ruined by mismanagement of old guard . . . we will respect the constitution , , , repeal repressive legislation , , , observe property rights . . . restore collateral value of land . . . pay compensation , , , repeal indigenisation . . . reduce corruption . . . depoliticise, privatise parastatals . . . allow dual citizenship . . . diaspora vote . . . ‘

It could have been a party political broadcast for the Vigil. But we wouldn’t choose anyone with her history in Zanu PF to deliver it. Our supporters at the Chatham House meeting didn’t get a chance to ask her the question: ‘What do you know about the election rigging?’ At the very least the Vigil wants the full details from the Zanu PF defectors so that the world knows that all elections in the last two decades have been cooked. The Vigil certainly welcomes Mujuru to the ranks of the struggle for democracy. But we remain deeply distrustful of those who have been for so long close to the heart of Zanu PF evil. ‘Peace and reconciliation?’ The question remained unaddressed at the Chatham House meeting.

Nothing allowed – Saturday 15th October: On the eve of a visit to London, the human rights activist Patson Dzamara was arrested for – as he put it – ‘sitting in a public park’. Patson – brother of abducted Itai Dzamara – was chatting in Harare Gardens with a few others. One of the others was Linda Masarira, mother of five, only recently released from jail for taking part in protests. They were all bundled into a truck by police officers. When they demanded to know the charge, the police were apparently clueless saying only that it was an ‘instruction from above’. The group of six were released on bail on Saturday to stand trial on Monday. Prosecutors accused them of abusing and insulting some law enforcement agents by likening them to dogs and puppets.

Vigil supporters in the UK who have received invitations to attend a meeting in the UK Parliament on Wednesday to be addressed by Patson wonder whether this is a clumsy effort to stop him travelling to London. Or is it just routine intimidation? The Mugabe regime is now so paranoid that it has given up any pretence of observing the constitution. Waving the flag or even wearing clothes in the national colours is an offence. But when it comes to brazen corruption by the elite the police are suddenly powerless. An attempt to arrest higher education minister Jonathan Moyo for stealing public funds was halted by Mugabe himself. So much for the fight against corruption . . .

Everything must fall? – Saturday 22nd October: □ To paraphrase the famous observation by the German pastor Martin Niemöller: ‘First they came for Rhodes, then they came for Isaac

Newton, next they'll come for the constitution itself'. The Rhodesmustfall campaign which started at Cape Town University calling for the removal of a statue of the nineteenth century imperialist was seen by many to be rather silly but nevertheless understandable. Then students took their reforming mission further, seeking to scrap what they see as a 'Eurocentric' science curriculum in favour of traditional African theories. In particular, they dismissed Newton's work as colonial. The students have stopped short of calling it a 'Newtonmustfall' campaign perhaps realising this might validate Newton's law of gravity. Zimbabwean students have rather more pressing problems to face than removing Rhodes from his grave in the Matopos. And as far as decolonising science is concerned, they learnt to be sceptical of assertions that diesel comes from rocks in Chinhoyi.

But that doesn't seem to apply to Mugabe's nephew Patrick Zhuwao who seems ready to reject not only Rhodes and Newton but the constitution itself, asserting that Zanu PF is the state and it can use state resources to fund party projects. Zhuwao is not alone among Zanu PF leaders with this mindset. Vice President Mnangagwa, addressing a Zanu PF rally ahead of the Norton by-election, said the electorate should not waste their votes on an opposition candidate as that person would not access state resources to develop the constituency. He added that, after doling out agricultural land, Zanu PF was now providing residential stands to its supporters. More ominously, Social Welfare minister Prisca Mupfumira told starving Norton residents that they risked losing out on food aid if they were not Zanu PF members. So much for the constitution . . .

Zim activists denied UK visas – Saturday 29th October: A leading British parliamentarian has said it is disgraceful that prominent Zimbabwean civil rights campaigners are being refused visas to visit the UK to talk about the struggle against Mugabe and his Zanu PF regime. Kate Hoey, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe, was speaking at the Royal Geographical Society in London on Wednesday at a meeting of the Mike Campbell Foundation which was set up to address injustices involved in Mugabe's land seizures. She said a visa had been denied to one of the speakers invited to the gathering, Gift Konjana, who had been detained more than thirty times and his home petrol-bombed for helping destitute farm workers. Other activists refused visas include Pastor Evan Mawarire, leader of the #ThisFlag protest, now exiled in the United States, who had been invited to address the parliamentary group as well as to speak at the the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Another excluded activist was Patson Dzamara, brother of the abducted Itai, who was also due to speak to the parliamentary group.

Ms Hoey said the British government was letting in representatives of the Mugabe regime, including people who had been involved in killings, as well as other tainted people such as Joice Mujuru, but was more and more turning away seasoned campaigners for change. Kate said the British Ambassador to Harare Catriona Laing was angry at the refusal of visas and had taken

the matter up with the relevant government department. The problem appeared to involve financial guarantees regarding their stay in the UK.

A speaker from Zimbabwe who was able to get a visa was Bishop Ancelimo Magaya, founder of Grace Ablaze Ministries International, making his first visit to the UK. The Bishop, who is blind, received a standing ovation for his speech in which he said the people of Zimbabwe were 'wounded and despondent'. He spoke of abductions and a tired dictatorial leadership holding on to power by brutality. Mugabe had mastered the art of giving the impression that he allowed democratic elections but they were all rigged and people intimidated. 'Diplomats don't see this', he added. In answer to a question from one of the 28 Vigil supporters at the meeting, the Bishop said people in the diaspora were automatically regarded by the regime as sell-outs and were liable to be treated as such when they returned home. Anyway, there was nothing for them if they did go back.

Another speaker at the gathering was Professor Craig J Richardson, an American economist and author of a book 'The Collapse of Zimbabwe in the Wake of the 2000 – 2003 land reforms'. Asked by a Vigil supporter to comment on studies by British academics Ian Scoones and Joseph Hanlon painting land reform in a positive light, Professor Richardson said 'The studies I have seen were carried out in a specific area and were unrepresentative. The growth they showed was because they were starting from zero, giving a misleading impression'.

Belshazzar's feast – Saturday 5th November: The meeting between Mugabe and Zuma in Harare on Thursday was a surreal encounter between the doomed and the damned. 'His Excellency President Zuma brings with him a cloud of hope and integrity' gushed Zanu PF, adding that Zuma was walking in Mugabe's footsteps. They ignored the dark cloud of hopelessness in South Africa over the rampant corruption which has damned his presidency. And as far as 'integrity' goes, the Vigil supposes that Zanu PF must have its own definition of this word. Just ask Jonathan Moyo, who didn't even bother to go to court on Friday to answer for his defrauding of state funds – even though he had given an undertaking to be there. As for the doomed Mugabe, he is already booked in next month for more monkey gland injections in Singapore. In the meantime, state television was banned from showing him tottering to the lectern at the Zuma meeting. The Daily News quotes Zanu PF insiders as saying it could be 'mene, mene, tekel and parsim' time for Mugabe (the words appearing on the wall during Belshazzar's feast). They were interpreted by the Prophet Daniel to mean 'God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end . . .' Angry South Africans must hope that Zanu PF is right that Zuma really is 'walking in Mugabe's footsteps' and that his banquet too is about to end.

Campaign against visa refusal – Saturday 12th November: The Vigil has launched a petition to the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, following the refusal of visas to Zimbabwean human rights activists invited to address audiences in London. The petition reads:

Exiled Zimbabweans and supporters appeal to the UK government to allow Zimbabwean civil rights campaigners to take up invitations to visit the UK so that they can tell the world about the worsening situation in Zimbabwe. A number of prominent activists have been denied entry although members of the Mugabe regime have been given visas despite having a history of human rights abuses.'

A new onslaught – Saturday 19th November: The ruthless crushing of the latest anti-government demonstration in Harare, combined with news that the army is recruiting thousands more soldiers, suggest that Zanu PF's strategy for stealing elections has not changed. The scenario is confirmed by the announcement that the diaspora will only be allowed to vote in 2018 if they return home to register and stay on or return again for the ballot – despite the lauded 2013 constitution giving every Zimbabwean the right to vote. The Zimbabwean diaspora is believed to number some 4 million – the overwhelmingly majority of voting age. The registered electorate at home is put at around 6.6 million, so the diaspora would have a decisive say. Rita Makarau, chair of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, said that the electoral laws had not yet been aligned with the new constitution introduced three years ago. The Vigil thinks that this is a step that Zanu PF is never likely to take, making our constitution a hollow mockery.

The Vigil is not surprised that six activists were shot at and beaten up ahead of Friday's planned demonstration against the introduction of 'bond notes'. Ishmail Kauzani, who was driving one of the two cars containing the activists when they were blocked by unmarked pick-up trucks, said he managed to escape into the night under a hail of gunfire. 'They were firing on us when we were still driving - many, many shots. It was like a war zone, a barrage of bullets', he said. Although the Vigil was not surprised by the regime's ambush we were surprised at the lack of wider support for the demonstration given the opposition's promises to confront Mugabe on the streets.

The final nail – Saturday 26th November: Despite the government's last minute hesitation, the Reserve Bank has announced that it is to release its monopoly money on Monday – widely seen as the final nail in the coffin of the Zimbabwean economy. Human rights lawyer Irene Petras said that the authorities have 'illegally, immorally and inhumanely set about destroying Zimbabwean lives for a second time' – a reference to the hyperinflation era which ended with the abandonment of the Zimbabwean currency in 2009. The Reserve Bank says \$10 million of bond notes in denominations of \$2 and \$5 are to be issued, along with \$2 million worth of \$1 dollar bond coins. But few believe it will stop there. Because Zimbabweans have lived through this asset stripping before, they know exactly what to expect. Savings will be wiped out by

rapidly depreciating Mickey Mouse money for the benefit of the elite which will externalise all remaining US dollars in the country. The move is likely to be badly received by the army. Reuters news agency says it has seen a report by the Central Intelligence Organisation warning Mugabe that introduction of bond notes would cause his downfall.

There has been widespread unrest at the move although the promised 'mother of all demonstrations' against bond notes last week failed to gain support amid allegations that money collected for the Harare protest was misappropriated. It is reported that this prompted Tajamuka to pull out of the demonstration at the last moment. Zimbabwe People First spokesman Jealousy Mawarire said as much as \$100,000 may have been involved. He said: 'As long as the struggle is commercialised we will always have these solo sporadic selfie moments disguised as demos'. Others talk of activists 'milking donor funds' and 'living large'. The accusations come as no surprise to us. We ourselves refuse to have anything to do with one of the protest leaders because of our own experience working with him. This person certainly fits the bill of being a 'selfie activist': always in the photograph, in the news, known to all the journalists, ready with a quote. We at the Vigil marvel at how he seems to have a 'get out if jail free' card. With no visible means of support, he nevertheless pops up regularly in the UK, always impeccably dressed, hustling for money. The social media protest movements need to beware the bad apple effect.

A dead parrot – Saturday 3rd December: The dead parrot sketch from Monty Python's Flying Circus says everything we need to know about the new bond notes. For those who are not familiar with this old BBC television comedy, the sketch is about a customer who goes into a pet shop complaining that he had been sold a dead parrot. The shopkeeper says the parrot is not dead, just resting after a long squawk. The Zimbabwean economy seems to the Vigil to be a dead parrot. With police rushing to crush any sign of dissent over the introduction of bond notes, it was left to the diaspora in London to show the contempt with which Zimbabweans regard the latest Zanu PF rip-off. The Vigil was particularly angered by the abduction and torture of Ishmael Kauzani after the abortive bond note protest in Harare on Wednesday. He is a member of our sister organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe and is in hospital in a critical condition. 'Mugabe uses bond notes to buy wheelchair' read one of the posters in our demonstration outside the Embassy today during which Fungayi Mabhunu in our Mugabe mask was pushed around the Vigil in a wheelchair. A central message was a display of Zimbabwean \$100 trillion notes. Bond notes were shown as the successor to the dead, deceased, defunct Zimbabwean currency in the form of Mickey Mouse monopoly money.

'We are Zimbabwe' – Saturday 10th December: 'L'etat c'est moi' (I am the state) was a remark by King Louis XIV that reflected the despotic regime before the French Revolution, when the people lived in poverty, lorded over by a rich aristocracy. Now we hear the same thing from

the Zanu PF elite. 'We are Zimbabwe' was the response of Grace Mugabe's son and son-in-law to protests when they illegally seized three properties in Harare. In effect: 'you can do nothing about it. We can do whatever we want.' Court documents about Grace's purchase of a \$1.3 million diamond ring last year – said to be a present from Mugabe – showed the complete contempt with which the Mugabe mafia regard the rule of law. The properties belonging to a Lebanese diamond dealer were seized in a dispute after Grace decided she didn't want the ring after all. Perhaps the diamond was too small. Among the questions we want an answer to are: how was Grace able to send the \$1.3 million to Dubai from her Harare bank despite exchange controls? When she decided she didn't want the ring, how could she so confidently order the repayment to be deposited in a Dubai bank account rather than returned to Harare – when this amounted to illegal externalisation of money?

Disgraceful Zimbabwe – Saturday 17th December: After his tireless work this year, travelling long distances to promote Brand Zimbabwe around the world, President Mugabe could not hide his disappointment at Zanu PF's Conference in Masvingo. All too little had been achieved at home while he had been away, he noted sadly. There had been too many juvenile squabbles in Zanu PF and silly protests from dissidents despite the hundreds of top of the range cars provided. And more cars were still to come. Of course, he said, he would like to retire and milk his cows. But the sad truth was that everyone else in Zimbabwe was either deluded or naughty. 'So we just have to soldier on to ensure continued prosperity and economic growth in line with ZimAsset.' Zanu PF agreed with the President and confirmed support for his sacrificial offer to stand for re-election in 2018. The party is fortunate because he will still be just under 100 when that presidential term ends so he will be able to stand again.

Expensive holiday season – Saturday 24th December: As Zimbabweans tighten their belts at another bleak Christmas, President Mugabe is taking a month-long rest in Singapore. He left Harare by chartered plane on 20th December accompanied by his family, aides, security people and \$6 million from the Reserve Bank which will have to last them until the end of January. The holiday may cheer up Grace Mugabe who must have been annoyed to have been ordered by the High Court to return Harare properties she seized from a Dubai diamond dealer in a dispute over a \$1.3 million gem she thought was not good enough. Zimbabweans can relax for a while because the government has closed down for seasonal celebrations and will do nothing for five weeks or so. Then it will spring into life to prepare for the President's 93rd

birthday party in February.

Stony road ahead – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 31st December: As we begin a new year it is difficult to imagine that it will be a happy one in Zimbabwe. Even optimists will find it hard to see anything but a stony road ahead. We at the Vigil in the depths of a British winter are further

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chilled by the bleak analysis of Prince Mashele, executive director of the Centre for Politics and Research in South Africa. He argues that 'Western' values of accountability, political morality, reason and so on are not African and that it is idle to hope that Africans will have democracies of the type existing in Europe. He says: 'People must not entertain the illusion that a day is coming when SA will look like the US. Our future is more on the side of Zimbabwe, where one ruler is more powerful than the rest of the population.' He goes on: 'How else are we to explain the thousands of people who flock to stadiums to clap hands for a president who has violated their country's constitution? . . . In a typical African country people have no illusion about the unity of morality and governance. People know that those who have power have it for themselves and their friends and families.' As we embark on 2017, we at the Vigil cling to the hope that Mashele is too pessimistic and that, having gone through so much suffering, Zimbabweans, given the chance, will find the road to freedom.