

## Zimbabwean human rights activist seized on eve of UK demonstration

Written by Administrator

Monday, 12 January 2009 23:30 - Last Updated Wednesday, 14 January 2009 22:45

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**Press release from the Zimbabwe Vigil – Monday 12th January 2009 – 22.30 pm**

**Zimbabwean human rights activist seized on eve of UK demonstration**



A leading Zimbabwean political activist in the UK campaigning for human rights in Zimbabwe has been taken into detention and told he is to be deported on Thursday. Luka Phiri (40) was helping organise a demonstration in London for Tuesday 13th January calling for Zimbabwean failed asylum seekers to be allowed to work in the UK.

Phiri is on the management team of the Zimbabwe Vigil, which has been demonstrating outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London every Saturday for the last six years. He is also a leading member of the Zimbabwe Association, a charity looking after Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK.

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Phiri entered the UK in 2003 on a Malawian passport and it is apparently for this reason that the Home Office wishes to expel him. At present the government is not enforcing deportations to Zimbabwe

because of the situation there but feels free to send people back to Malawi

Vigil Co-ordinator Rose Benton said "There is no doubt that Luka is a Zimbabwean but the Home Office wants to send him back to Malawi, a firm supporter of Mugabe. Malawi will send him on to

Harare

where he will face retribution from the Mugabe regime."

She said Luka was a high profile campaigner in the UK and would be well-known to the authorities in

Harare. "He has given many outspoken interviews to the media on behalf of the Vigil." She added that he'd been detained in the

UK in 2006 but had been released while his asylum case was considered. New evidence had been submitted but it appears that this had not been taken into account.

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Mr Phiri's MP, Mr Stephen Timms (Labour, East Ham), has been asked to intervene with the government.

### Notes

1. The 'right to work' demonstration is organised by Citizens for Sanctuary. Protestors are meeting opposite 10 Downing Street at noon on Tuesday 13th January and a delegation will be taking in a petition to the Prime Minister at 12.45.

For more info contact Jonathan Cox,  
07919 484 066.

2. Luka is held at the Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre, Colnbrook Bypass, Harmondsworth, West Drayton UB7 0FX. Phone: 020 8607 5200, Fax: 020 8759 7996. Visiting times: Daily, 1400 - 2100 (last admission 2030)

3. He is booked to fly to Malawi on Thursday at 7 pm with Kenya Airlines KQ101 from Heathrow.

4. For more information, contact: Rose Benton 07970 996 003, 07932 193 467.