

VIGIL ALERT – 18th July 2011

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 19 July 2011 21:16 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 July 2011 21:16

Vigil supporter Josephine Chari of Southend has been detained by the UK Border Agency and told she has been booked on Kenyan Airways KQ101 to Nairobi leaving Heathrow at 20.00 on Thursday 21st July.

Her case is being addressed by the Zimbabwe Association and others. For our part, the Vigil believes that Zimbabwean failed asylum seekers should not be removed until the situation in Zimbabwe is safe for opponents of Mugabe and when they can make a living. As it is, there are constant reports of violence and human rights abuses from Zimbabwe.

Josephine has been a regular Vigil supporter. She is being deported when there is no guarantee of her safety, particularly as she is a person who has been visible as a Vigil activist.

For the Vigil's approach to this, here is part of our basic submission to the Home Office / UKBA:

In July 2010 an activist representing the Vigil and our partner organisation Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe returned home on a visit. He was identified as a Vigil supporter and arrested, beaten up and tortured. □

He would still be there if it hadn't been for our efforts to get him legal help and escape from Zimbabwe. (See Vigil diaries of 31/07/2010:

<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/ZimVigil-Diary-Entries/zimbabwe-vigil-diary-31st-july-2010.html>

, 07/08/2010:

<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/ZimVigil-Diary-Entries/zimbabwe-vigil-diary-7th-august-2010.html>

)). The Vigil does not know how any other individual would be treated if returned to Zimbabwe. But this incident shows that activism in the UK and attendance at the Vigil increases the risk of being known by the forces within Zimbabwe that still perpetrate violence against Mugabe opponents. We are a high-profile protest that has been under constant surveillance by intelligence operatives of the regime. Our supporters are those who care enough about the human rights abuses in their country to attend our protests. Many of them make a considerable effort in terms of cost and long hours travelling to come because they see the right of freedom to protest, which is denied to those back home, as important in the campaign against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. □

Our supporters are easy to identify because we are an on-the-street protest constantly photographed by the passing public (including unidentified people who do not join the protest

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and who our supporters confirm as Zimbabwean). Photos taken by ourselves appear on many photo and video websites which can be accessed by the Zimbabwe Central Intelligence Organisation. This was demonstrated when one of our reports accompanied by a photo of one of our supporters appeared in the newspaper the Zimbabwean which is circulated in Zimbabwe as well as South Africa and the UK. Within days his family home in Zimbabwe was raided by the police who spoke angrily about Zimbabweans in the UK – check: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/ZimVigil-Diary-Entries/zimbabwe-vigil-diary-22nd-august-2009.html>

. More recently, the funeral of the mother of a member of the Vigil management team was disrupted by Mugabe's Zanu PF members because of his involvement with the Vigil – check: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/312-voice-of-british-caribbeans-ashamed-of-mugabe-zimbabwe-vigil-diary-4th-june-2011>

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The UK government indicated last year that it was ending its moratorium on sending home failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers despite continuing evidence of political violence and the targeting of anti-Mugabe activists. The Vigil would be interested in hearing of anyone being sent back. As mentioned in our last diary another supporter has been given a date by which to leave.

You may want to phone Kenyan airways (0871 258 2179) to persuade them to refuse to take Josephine on the flight.

For further information: co-ordinator@zimvigil.co.uk , 07970 996 003.