

Strong support for the Vigil's criticism of the European Union's new policy of 're-engaging' with the Mugabe regime has come from a former senior American official.

'To appease a brutal dictator and his henchmen is to wind up on the wrong side of history', warns the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Todd Moss (see: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/03/mugabes-new-best-friends-in-brussels/>

). Mr Moss's article appears in 'Foreign Policy' magazine with the sub title 'Why is Europe suddenly cozying up to Zimbabwe's nonagenarian kleptocrat'? He says Mugabe's lavish birthday celebration '

was yet another reminder of the stark contrast between the increasingly venal lifestyles of the country's politically-connected

*nouveau riche*

and regular Zimbabweans, who are now

[poorer](#)

than they were when Mugabe came to power nearly 35 years ago'.

With President Obama renewing American sanctions for another year, Mr Moss says that it is perplexing that Europe is now choosing to break ranks and resuming aid, signalling a shift in approach from sticks to carrots. Europe, he says, is wilfully blind to what is happening and who is responsible for the worsening conditions in Zimbabwe. 'Any new support for the current government will likely only further entrench the current coterie around Mugabe.'

He notes: 'When announcing the resumption of aid, a jovial EU ambassador to Zimbabwe, Phillip van Damme, [claimed](#) , "In a true partnership among equals, we may sometimes diverge in opinion and vision. But those divergences can be overcome through real, frank and open dialogue without taboos. It's like in a marriage." While diplomats in the field

sometimes get lost in their bubble or mistake cocktail parties for real politics, I just cannot believe that European policymakers are under the illusion that the problems in Zimbabwe are from a lack of communication. Do the Europeans really believe they will overcome their differences with the government of Zimbabwe on [torture](#), land grabbing, vote stealing, and [diamond theft](#) via open dialogue? Surely not.'

Mr Moss concludes that 'the ethical and strategic move is to keep Mugabe and his birthday party guests at arm's length'.

A different view is taken by Dr Tapiwa Shumba, former spokesperson for the MDC in South Africa, who says opposition parties must realise that Zanu PF and Mugabe are in power and stop being confrontational. 'It is because of this confrontational strategy that the opposition must also partly take responsibility for the obvious polarisation in the country', say Dr Shumba who has taken a one year sabbatical we presume to work out how the opposition can help run the gas chambers in Zimbabwe more economically. 'Opposition with co-operation' as he put it (see: <http://nehandaradio.com/2015/03/05/zimbabwe-opposition-must-change-from-confrontation-to-cooperation-shumba/>).

Whatever the differences of opinion over re-engaging Mugabe, no one can deny the rampant corruption in Zimbabwe. But despite this, Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) continues to pour money into Zimbabwe which we have long argued serves to prop up the regime. The author Jonathan Foreman says DFID is willfully naïve.

'The reason is that DFID staff, like so many people in Big Aid, are wearing ideological blinkers. They have to keep on giving money to governments that are ravaging their own societies, and they have to pretend that local officials are akin to our own, rather than bandits and exploiters. Otherwise they would have to surrender their core conviction that "fragile" (i.e. chaotic, corrupt, impoverished and dysfunctional) states are that way not through the fault of their own governments and elites, but only because of a lack of money, resources or technology, and/or because evil foreigners have wrecked them . . . It's why the UK's bloated aid effort will continue to be wasteful, inefficient and a kick in the teeth for the British taxpayer' (see: <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/02/13/britains-bloated-wasteful-foreign-aid-programme-is-next-to-useless/> –Incompetent British Aid Agency Overwhelmed By Too Much Money ).

The Zimbabwe Peace Project complained only this week that children of MDC members in Bindura South are being denied access to educational assistance under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). The British taxpayer has been the main sponsor of this project (see: [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit\\_w\\_opposition-party-members-children-denied-access-to-educational-assistance-zpp-newsday-zimbabwe/](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_w_opposition-party-members-children-denied-access-to-educational-assistance-zpp-newsday-zimbabwe/) ). British diplomats could take the matter up with the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, but its Chief Executive Ngonidzashe Gumbo has just been jailed for – you guessed it – corruption (see: <http://www.herald.co.zw/anti-corruption-commission-boss-jailed/> ). Not surprisingly, Mr Gumbo is a former Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police.

## **Other points**

- We had a chaotic start to the Vigil because all traffic was disrupted by a big demonstration over climate change. A police van was parked in the middle of our space.

- On a lovely sunny day (at the request of Enniah Dube, Vice-Chair of ROHR) we marked International Women's Day in support of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) who were beaten by police during a Valentine's Day protest in Bulawayo (see report from Amnesty International on our campaigns page: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/665-zimbabwe-update-from-amnesty-international-uk-woza-action-march-2015-> ).
  
- A meeting of the Zimbabwe Action Forum after the Vigil heard a preliminary report of a working committee set up to formulate a charter for the Zimbabwean diaspora.
  
- Thanks to a regular supporter who brought a number of Zimbabwean caps for us to sell in support of our activities.
  
- The Vigil has protested to the British Home Secretary Theresa May at an asylum judge's ill-informed criticism of us. You can see the letter on our campaigns page: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/666-a-discredited-judge--letter-to-the-uk-home-secretary> ).
  
- Thanks to Deborah Harry, Epiphania Phiri and Hilda Gwesele who sold drinks and snacks to fundraise at the Vigil. Thanks also the Eunice Mucherechedzo and Helen Rukambiro for taking care of the front table.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

**FOR THE RECORD:** 54 signed the register but there were many more at the protest.

**EVENTS AND NOTICES:**

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**ROHR Southampton branch meeting and outreach.** Saturday 14th March 11 am – 3 pm.  
Venue: Eastleigh Library, 1st Floor, Swan Centre, Eastleigh SO50 5SF. Special guests  
Councillor Wayne Irish and NHS Practitioner Sunitha Rajeev. For further enquiries please  
contact: Sally Mutseyami (Chairperson) on 07448730581.

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**ROHR Slough general meeting.** Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March from 11 am – 2 pm Venue: Upton Lea  
Community Hall, Slough. For more information contact: Fungisai Mupandira (Organising  
secretary ) 07758958803, (Chairperson )Patricia Masamba 07708116625, (Vice chairperson )  
Nkosi Tshabangu 07926 977 646.

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**The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco**, a play by Zimbabwean writer Andrew Whaley  
showing at the Gate Theatre, 11 Pembridge Road, London W11 3HQ, until

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March. The theatre has given the Vigil flyers with a promo code for discounted tickets of £5 until  
14  
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March. These can be picked up from the Vigil. Check:

[http://www.gatetheatre.co.uk/events/all-productions/the\\_rise\\_and\\_shine\\_of\\_comrade\\_fiasco](http://www.gatetheatre.co.uk/events/all-productions/the_rise_and_shine_of_comrade_fiasco)  
for more information and to book.

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**Democrats.** Two showings of this film about the constitution-making process in Zimbabwe in  
London on 20<sup>th</sup> March at 6.30 pm at the Barbican and 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 6.15 pm at the  
Ritzy, Brixton. Check:

<http://ff.hrw.org/film/democrats?city=4>

for tickets.

Both screenings are followed by discussion with filmmaker Camilla Nielsson and Dewa Mavhinga, Senior Researcher for Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch).

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**Next Swaziland Vigil.** Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March from 10 am to 1 pm outside the Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB.

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**Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March from 6.15 pm. From the Vigil it's about a 10 minute walk, in the direction away from Trafalgar Square. The Strand Continental is situated on the south side of the Strand between Somerset House and the turn off onto Waterloo Bridge. The entrance is marked by a sign at street level. It's between a newsagent and Pizza Express. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

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**Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF)** meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.

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**Zimbabwe Yes We Can meeting.** Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March at 12 noon. Venue: The Theodore Bullfrog, 26-30 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HL.

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**Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement** holds monthly meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.

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**The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the

activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

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**Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2014** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/642-zimbabwe-vigil-highlights-2014>

. Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2014 Highlights page.

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### **Facebook pages:**

Vigil: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8157345519&ref=ts>

ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.co/pages/ROHR-Zimbabwe-Restoration-of-Human-Rights/301811392835>

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SW Radio Africa's website and sound archive is being hosted on [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) . Go to the site and type in swradioafrica which will link you to snapshots of their site over the years and at the top of that page a link to their website where, under podcasts, you will find the audio.