

Sofa not so good – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 23rd March 2019

Written by Administrator

Monday, 25 March 2019 20:03 - Last Updated Monday, 25 March 2019 20:03

The cyclone that devastated eastern Zimbabwe was predictable. What was also predictable was the failure of the government to prepare for it. Everyone knew it was coming but nothing was done about it and it was not until it arrived that President Mnangagwa cut short yet another foreign trip for a brief visit home.

To make matters worse, the disaster victims in Chimanimani – one of the worst hit areas – desperate for aid, had to make do at first with Mnangagwa's sofa. It gave them little comfort to see presidential guards unloading furniture from a helicopter instead of emergency supplies.

Of course, it is only right that the President – no doubt exhausted by his tireless travels – should have the comfort of his sofa when he consoled the bereaved and assured them that everything possible was being done for them. The question is, by whom? Aid distribution is said to have been put on hold until the President arrived and could hand it out – prompting fears that it is being politicized as usual.

The entire budget allocation for this year for the Civil Protection Unit amounted to a meagre \$3 million. It could have got more had it not been for government profligacy in hiring expensive planes to take Mnangagwa on his manic travels – 28 trips abroad in the 15 months since he came to power. After announcing two days of mourning, he immediately departed for Angola to mark the anniversary of the Southern African Liberation Day – which most regional heads of state didn't bother to attend.

Whatever the failures of the government, there can be no doubting the open-hearted response of the people of Zimbabwe to the disaster. People abroad have also responded generously. The British Ambassador Ms Melanie Robinson told the President that the UK had already committed \$23 million to assist victims of cyclone Idai. 'Here in Zimbabwe we have prepositioned equipment in Mutare so we have been able to respond very quickly and that is health equipment, medical supplies and some hygiene equipment and making sure that it gets to the people who really need it.' Pity the Zimbabwean government didn't do the same.

Other points.

- Central London was packed with people attending a rally in Parliament Square demanding

a new referendum on whether the UK should leave the European Union.

- The Vigil mourns the loss of our good friend Arnold Magwanyata. He was a faithful supporter of the Vigil and ROHR. We made a collection for his family. A

gofundme page has been opened for those who wish to donate to Arnold's repatriation, check: https://www.gofundme.com/help-repatriate-arnold-magwanyata-to-zimbabwe&rcid=r01-155346313999-af1335f3a2034edb&pc=wa_co_campmgmt_m

- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the front table and put up the banners: Patrick Hale, Jonathan Kariwo, Thomas Mahasoh, Patricia Masamba, Bianca Mpawaenda, Agnes Mukumba, Margaret Munenge, Richard Munyama, Tapiwa Muskwe and Casper Nyamakura. Thanks to Patricia, Margaret, Agnes and Lucia Mungwari for looking after the front table, to Bianca, Agnes, Bigboy Sibanda, Tinotenda Chihope and Netsayi Makarichi for handing out flyers and to Jonathan, Casper and Heather Makawa for photos.

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

FOR THE RECORD: 23 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **ROHR general members' meeting.** Saturday 13th April from 11 am. Venue: Royal Festival Hall. Contact: Ephraim Tapa 07940793090, Patricia Masamba 07708116625.

- **ROHR fundraising dinner.** Saturday 27th April from 6 – 11.30 pm. Venue Zazas, 108 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1JE. Contact: Siphobane 07400566013, Esther Munyira 07492058109, Fungisai Mupandira 07468504393, Casper Nyamakura 0757766912, Margaret Munenge 0739211743, Bianca Mpawaenda 07400566013 and Patricia Masamba 07708116625.

- **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.

- **MDC London Branch meeting.** Saturday 6th April from 12 noon – 2 pm. Venue: Royal Festival Hall. Contact: Netsai Makarichi 07592619201 and Flemming Diza 07960838847.

- **The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency'** is based on our weekly diaries. It records how events in Zimbabwe have unfolded as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil for £10. All proceeds go to the Vigil and

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our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

- **Facebook pages:** Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil> ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF:

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