

Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2010

Written by Administrator

Monday, 21 February 2011 15:23 - Last Updated Monday, 21 February 2011 15:30

Saturday 9th January

- Snow at the Vigil. It's our eighth winter protesting outside the Zimbabwe Embassy but the first time it has snowed . . . To protect us from the elements we used two tarpaulins – one to catch the snow and the other as a windbreak.

- During the week the Vigil sent the following letter to the International Development Committee of the British Parliament, which is to review the British government's aid to Zimbabwe. "The Zimbabwe Vigil wishes to express its opposition to any dilution of the pressure on Mugabe and his cronies until they comply fully with the Global Political Agreement signed with the two MDC factions in September 2008. We believe, in particular, that to give development aid to the coalition government is premature and will send the wrong signals . . .

Saturday 16th January

Revival of Vigil petition to the international football federation to move the soccer World Cup from South Africa in response to President Zuma's cynical suggestion that the MDC should simply accept that Mugabe would not implement the agreement he signed 16 months ago. Zuma said the MDC should 'park' the issues in contention. The Vigil believes that, by not addressing the human rights issues in Zimbabwe, Zuma is putting the whole region in danger. He needs to take another shower.

Tuesday 26th January

Vigil representatives attended the Parliamentary Committee Hearing on assistance to Zimbabwe at the House of Commons.

Saturday 30th January

- With the failure of the SADC-mediated talks to resolve differences over the Global Political Agreement, the Vigil launched a new petition calling for elections as soon as possible. The petition reads: ‘ **Petition to President Zuma of South Africa**: After a year of the Zimbabwe interim government it is clear that it is going nowhere so we call on President Zuma as mediator for the Southern African Development Community to arrange free and fair elections as soon as possible.’ We intend to submit the petition to the South African High Commission during President Zuma’s state visit to Britain in March.

- Gwinyai Primary School were delighted to receive a consignment of sports equipment and stationery from the Vigil. The goods were purchased thanks to a class at the Dolphin School, Battersea, and their teacher Steve Garvey.

Saturday 6th February

- This week we sent Morgan Tsvangirai a petition we have been running for several months urging the MDC to stop co-operating with Mugabe. The petition reads ‘ **Petition to the Zimbabwean Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai.**

We urge you to refuse to co-operate with President Mugabe until he respects the rule of law and complies fully with the agreement under which the Zimbabwean coalition government was formed in February.’

- Launch of ZimVigil TV by Dr Tim Rusike of ZBN News from footage he took at the Vigil.

Saturday 13th February

Our Iranian friends in London have created a poster showing Mugabe and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shaking hands.

Mugabe Birthday Protest – Saturday 20th February

Swigging appropriately from a Methuselah of champagne, a swaggering (or was it swaying) Robert Mugabe, accompanied by Amazing Grace, celebrated his 86th birthday at the Zimbabwe Embassy. Mugabe (in the Vigil mask) visited the nearby South African High Commission to pay his disrespects ahead of President Zuma's visit to London displaying a sign reading 'No Zumabwe'. Presents for Mugabe were labeled Giles Mutsekwa (Co-Minister of Home Affairs), Elias Mudzuri (Minister of Energy and Power Development) and Murisi Zwizwai (Deputy Minister of Mines) – the MDC ministers being investigated by the party on allegations of joining the corrupt Zanu(PF) gravy train.

Saturday 27th February

· Vigil letter sent to the South African High Commissioner in London requesting permission to present our petition to President Zuma when he calls at the High Commission during his State Visit (3

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March). A copy of a Vigil letter to Zuma is included.

“The Zimbabwe Vigil is pleased that you are supporting elections in Zimbabwe in 2011, as envisaged in the Global Political Agreement. We are aware that politicians in Zimbabwe don't want new elections until they have had their fill at the trough but we believe that the situation can only worsen until there is a democratically elected government in place. What Zimbabweans want to know from you is how SADC can ensure that the elections are free and fair, given that Zanu (PF) has already reactivated militia bases and refuses to implement the GPA.”

- ZimVigil TV page goes live on Zimvigil. Dr Tim of ZBN News reports that his coverage of last week's Mugabe birthday demo had unprecedented response from all round the world especially Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Wednesday 3rd March

Vigil regular Josephine Zhuga gave a passionate account of the life of women in Zimbabwe to an appreciative audience of students at City and Islington College to mark International Women's Day.

Thursday 4th March

- Vigil supporters attended a meeting at the Royal Commonwealth Society on 'The Role of the Media in Zimbabwe's Transition' at which the BBC journalist Sue Lloyd-Roberts spoke about her recent damning report 'The polarised lives of Zimbabwe's rich and poor'.

- The Vigil's Ephraim Tapa took part in a BBC Radio debate. He wiped the floor with Blessing Miles-Tendi who had written a piece advocating the lifting of sanctions.

South Africa House Protest to greet President Zuma, Friday 5th March

Protest outside South Africa House to greet President Zuma during his State Visit. Our message: elections cannot come soon enough provided that the international community can ensure that they are free and fair. Our petition outlining this was delivered to the High Commission. Mugabe (in the Vigil's mask) was present to greet his friend Zuma with the following placards: 'Thank you Zuma', 'Bring me my machine gun' and 'Have another wife on me'. Zuma's appeal for the lifting of targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his gang went down like a lead balloon. It made him seem out of touch with reality. Here's what the Times said in a leading article 'Jacob Zuma is hard to take seriously, but his support of Robert Mugabe is a disgrace'. The real message to Zuma was in the spontaneous booring from more than 100 Zimbabweans and the chant of 'Shame on you' when he arrived. We were joined by some South Africans who shouted something like 'Ag Ag Zuma is Kak', whatever that means.

Saturday 6th March

We were told that we were joined by actor Jeremy Irons during the singing of Ishe Komberera / Nkosi Sikeleli. Judge for yourself – picture 2128. Many famous actors have dropped by in the past including Tim Robbins, Emma Thompson and Simon Callow. We are grateful for their support.

Saturday 13th March

Launch of Vigil petition to the UN Security Council calling on it to ensure that the elections are not stolen again. The petition reads: 'We call on the Security Council to ensure that the next elections in Zimbabwe are free and fair. We look to the United Nations to supervise the electoral process and the handover of power to a new government and believe peace-keeping troops will need to be in place before, during and after the polling.'

As we explained to President Zuma, Vigil supporters believe that the situation in Zimbabwe can only worsen the longer elections are delayed. Our argument is that:

1. After a year of the interim unitary government it is clear that it is making no progress. If anything it is going backwards. The Mugabe regime has shown that it is determined to cling to power and that it will block real change, such as a free media and independent judiciary, so new elections are the only way forward.
2. The situation will steadily deteriorate as long as Mugabe and his gang remain in power. Finance Minister Tendai Biti has admitted his hoped-for foreign budgetary aid and external investment will not be realised and, on top of that, the national exchequer has seen zero benefit from the exploitation of the Chiadzwa diamond fields.
3. The Vigil rejects the argument that lifting or suspending targeted sanctions will make the Mugabe regime more conciliatory. On the contrary, we are convinced that appeasing the regime will only encourage it in its intransigence. We believe that the Mugabe gang fears that any change will lead to their prosecution for human rights and other abuses and that it is up to South Africa – as their supporter over the years – to make arrangements for the future of these criminals.
4. In particular, Vigil supporters reject the notion that sanctions should be lifted because they are misrepresented by the Mugabe regime as sanctions against Zimbabweans in general. We

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believe the proper answer to Mugabe's propaganda is to patiently convey the truth to Zimbabweans and deluded Mugabe sympathizers in Africa and elsewhere. The Allies in the Second World War did not defeat national socialism, Italian fascism and Japanese militarism by bowing to their odious propaganda.

Saturday 27th March

Milestone was the sale of the 1,000th of our hessian bags labelled 'Working for a new Zimbabwe – www.zimvigil.co.uk'. All profits from the sale of these bags have gone to help our work. Thanks to Caroline Witts who has brought them all the way from Exeter, Devon (170 miles from London) for the last 2 years.

Saturday 3rd April

All the equipment from pupils at the Dolphin School in London has now been delivered to four schools in Zimbabwe: Gwinyai Primary School, Southerton Primary School, Gumbo Primary School and Baring Primary School.

Sunday 4th April

A special Prayer Vigil for Zimbabwe outside the Zimbabwe Embassy on Easter Day was attended by about 100 people. It took place after a procession from nearby St

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Martin-in-the-Fields Church where Vigil supporter Josephine Zhuga led the choir.

Independence Day Protest – Saturday 17th April

The Vigil marked Zimbabwe's 30th anniversary of Independence with a big attendance during which we left thirty candles at the South African High Commission to remind them of their obligation to help us achieve true independence. We were joined by Lovemore Matombo of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and Gabriel Shumba of the Zimbabwe Exiles Forum. Another visitor to the Vigil was Mr Mugabe (in our Mugabe mask).

He joined us at the South African High Commission with a placard reading 'Thanks Comrade Malema'.

He reappeared later outside the Zimbabwe Embassy with a bottle of wine and large glass and a placard reading 'Here's to another 30 years'.

Saturday 1st May 2010

The Vigil marked May Day by supporting an appeal from Amnesty International for the Zimbabwean authorities to stop intimidating and harassing human rights activists. People at the Vigil carried placards reading: 'May Day Appeal - End Human Rights Abuses in Zimbabwe', 'May Day Appeal - Protect Human Rights Activists in Zimbabwe' and 'Vigil Supports Oppressed Trade Unionists in Zimbabwe'.

Shane Enright

Amnesty International official

said: "It's so

important that people around the world stand in solidarity with the brave human rights and trade union activists in Zimbabwe this May Day. Our message to the police and security services is that we are watching you and will call you to account, however long it takes."

Monday 3rd May

Many Vigil supporters attended the London Citizens and Citizens UK pre-election assembly with David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown at the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. The immigration question was at the heart of the meeting. One of the questions raised was about the welfare of children detained with their parents in immigration centres and there were promises to look into this.

Saturday 8th May 2010

The Vigil received an email from James Chidakwa about a commemoration for his friend and fellow activist Tonderai Ndira who was brutally murdered two years ago. Reports say that he had been shot in the heart, with multiple stab wounds, his eyes gouged, his tongue cut out, and his neck, skull, jaw and knuckles broken.

Tuesday 11th May

Vigil supporters attended a memorial for Tonderai Ndira. They reported that it was a warm-hearted occasion as they remembered the horrors meted out to Tonderai two years ago. Money was raised to support Tonderai's family.

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Friday 21st May

Vigil dancers performed at City and Islington College's Adult Learners' Week Family Fun Day. They electrified the audience with their energetic dancing and rousing singing.

Regulars at the Vigil require no rehearsal and can just step up and perform at a moment's notice.

Saturday 29th May

The Vigil sends letter to Foreign Secretary William Hague calling on the new British government to support our demand for early elections in Zimbabwe and urging the British government to ensure peacekeeping troops are sent to Zimbabwe to prevent Mugabe from stealing the elections.

Saturday 12th June

- Mugabe (in our mask) popped up at the Vigil to demand that the next World Cup should be held in Zimbabwe to celebrate his 90th birthday. The Vigil sported England flags and placards wishing the England football team good luck in the competition. We are also running a World Cup draw for Vigil supporters.

- Two prominent human rights activists from Zimbabwe visit the Vigil: Irene Petras of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and Roselyn Hanzi the Project Manager for both the Human Rights Defenders Unit and the Constitutional Reform and Policy Formulation Unit. Addressing the Vigil, Irene said Zimbabweans in the diaspora should hesitate to go home until

the rule of law was restored and human rights were respected.

- During the week a number of Vigil supporters attended a House of Lords debate on Zimbabwe. Management team Member Patson Muzuwa said that afterwards a number of peers who took part in the debate said they were very disappointed at the failure of South Africa to resolve the Zimbabwe crisis

- Vigil supporters attended two events to launch 'Zimbabwe – Years of Hope and Despair' a book by Philip Barclay a diplomat who was based at the British Embassy in Harare from 2006 – 2009. Vigil people walked out of the first meeting, hosted by the MDC Central London Forum, when a Mugabe apologist was given a platform to spout Zanu PF propaganda at length. One Vigil supporter said she was not prepared to listen to someone who supported murderers, rapists and torturers. At the official book launch later in the week Mr Barclay said he had been interested to see this division in the Zimbabwean diaspora in London.

Media Release from the Zimbabwe Vigil – Monday 14th June

Hague: New government to continue policy on Zimbabwe

Reply to Vigil letter from new British Foreign Secretary, William Hague. He made it clear there will no change of policy on Zimbabwe. 'I am aware of the good work the Zimbabwe Vigil does in keeping alive the pressure for reform in Zimbabwe. It is dispiriting to consider just how long the people of Zimbabwe have been waiting for the opportunity to express their views in free and fair elections and to be able to contribute to the revival of a prosperous and democratic country . . . I wish the Zimbabwe Vigil every success in achieving their aim of a peaceful and democratic Zimbabwe.'

Saturday 26th June

Church service in support of Zimbabwean victims of torture with the Vigil providing the choir and drummers. Speakers at the service included the Rev Useni Sibanda (National Director of Zimbabwe Christian Alliance) who joined a procession to the Vigil where he paid tribute to the Vigil for carrying on the struggle for so long.

Saturday 3rd July

The Zimbabwean Deputy Prime Minister, Thokozani Khupe, has spurned opportunities to meet the Vigil during her week long visit to London beginning on 4th July. This does not surprise us. We suspect we are seen as a noisy embarrassment by the MDC leadership as they burrow deeper into the fertile ground of Zimbabwean government corruption.

Thursday 8th July

The following appeared in the Londoner's Diary of the London Evening Standard: ***'Zimbabwean deputy PM upsets exiles:***

What not to wear to the Commonwealth Society . . . Zimbabwe's Deputy Prime Minister Ms Thokozani Khupe, who was a popular anti-Robert Mugabe figure before she joined the government after the 2008 election is in London but has upset sometime supporters by demanding they put on their gladrags and pay up to get an audience with her. Ms Khupe spoke at the Royal Commonwealth Society in Northumberland Avenue last night. Members of the Zimbabwe Vigil, who demonstrate against human rights abuses outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in The Strand every Saturday, had been surprised to be invited to meet her face to face at a dinner after the event. The catch was the ticket price and the dress code. Leaders of the Vigil find it offensive that, with Zimbabwe producing more asylum seekers than any other

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country, diners were expected to pay £25 for the dinner and to wear lounge suits or cocktail dresses . . .'

Friday 9th July

Vigil supporters attended a meeting at Lancaster House at which Mark Canning, British Ambassador to Zimbabwe, spoke on "The politics and situation in Zimbabwe and the UK Government's response".

Saturday 10th July

The immortal Dr Pangloss was a character in Voltaire's novel *Candide* – immortal not least because he is now working for the British Foreign Office. Pangloss was super-optimistic. Amid the chaos of the Lisbon earthquake 250 years ago he could still maintain 'All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds'. This appears to be the attitude of the Foreign Office towards the chaos in Zimbabwe. It sees steady progress (although at a 'glacial speed'). There are good things happening, we are told. In fact we should jolly well think of going back to enjoy them.

A different picture emerges from a former British diplomat in Harare, Philip Barclay, in his book 'Years of Hope and Despair'. Barclay has been promoting his book in London and points to continuing disregard of the rule of law and the increasing acquiescence of the MDC within the unity government.

Saturday 24th July

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- Senator David Coltart, the Zimbabwean Minister for Education, was given a friendly reception when he came to the Vigil at the end of his visit to London – a welcome that turned to cheers when he put on our bracelet ‘Mugabe Must Go’. Surrounded by Vigil supporters, he said ‘I know that many of you are very sceptical about this inclusive government. But I want to let you know that there is a group working very hard to make it work. Don’t write it off. But you do need to continue the Vigil because things are by no means right yet.’
- A large contingent of our supporters went to hear Mutambara speak at a London meeting after the Vigil. Apart from telling us about his massive intellect and brilliant education, he urged people with skills and capital to go home, brushing aside questions of violence and good governance.
- Another highlight was the arrival of the valiant Smale father and son team who had cycled 85 miles from Salisbury to the Vigil in aid of a charity for Zimbabwe.

Thursday 29th July

The Vigil made the front page of the Zimbabwe Herald this week. We are mentioned in the Herald’s interview with Hebson Makuvise, Zimbabwe’s Ambassador to Germany. He reportedly says of activists in the UK

“Every Saturday they gather at the Zimbabwean Embassy in the UK playing drums denouncing President Mugabe, Prime Minister Tsvangirai and the inclusive Government. They are then given some money by tourists who visit the embassy in the name of the suffering masses of Zimbabwe.”

He said he has tried without success to dissuade the activists from carrying out such activities . . . Makuvise, Tsvangirai’s uncle and former representative in the UK, tried to control the Vigil as he did the MDC in the UK. We can’t

forget how he thundered down to the Vigil with his goons and, oblivious to the irony, waved his fist at the Vigil Co-ordinator saying ‘How dare you accuse me of being a bully-boy!’

The latest development is that Ambassador Makuvise says he is instituting legal proceedings

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against the Zimdiaspora website which has published a report said to have been leaked from Tsvangirai's office which detailed alleged financial irregularities in the MDC UK and strongly criticized Makuvise. (Nothing further has been heard of these legal proceedings . .)

Saturday 31st July

- While both Mugabe and Tsvangirai have been seeking support from apostolic Christians, the Vigil was surprised to be joined by a large group of Zimbabwean Christians. We were grateful for their prayers – and touched when they prayed for those on our register. Dressed in white robes, they said they had come to London to spread peace. They are members of Friday Apostles 'Johane Masowe We Chishanu' and have a base in Sheffield in the north of England.

- We were glad to be joined by a Vigil activist we helped to escape from Zimbabwe. He said he was picked up on a recent trip home and randomly beaten up on the way to the police station. He was held in cells for 2 days in indescribable conditions and would probably still be there if we hadn't got legal help to get him out. The experience left him 2 kgs lighter.

Saturday 7th August

'Zuma Save Zimbabwe' was the theme of the Vigil as SADC prepares to hold a summit meeting in Namibia. Our banners urging South African intervention have so far failed to bear fruit but we were pleased that Mugabe's attempt to keep Zimbabwe off the agenda seems to have failed. As the recent AU Summit in Uganda showed, African leaders are all too willing to sweep Zimbabwe under the carpet on the basis that SADC has been handed the responsibility. Vigil supporters believe that, after eighteen months of Zanu-PF arrogance in refusing to implement the GPA, South Africa and SADC must now force Mugabe's hand. The Vigil urges SADC to address the real issue: how to ensure that elections are free and fair.

Saturday 14th August

A strong supporter of the Zimbabwe Vigil has been a Swazi lady Thobile Gwebu, who in January started a Vigil outside the Swaziland High Commission in London in protest at human rights abuses in her homeland. We were shocked that the UK Home Office has seen fit to detain her for immediate deportation and people at the Vigil signed a petition to the Home Office on her behalf. *'The Zimbabwe Vigil is appalled that her asylum claim has been turned down and that she is to be handed over to this medieval despot, who would like to spend the country's meagre revenues on a Boeing to fly his 14 wives to the fleshpots of the world.'*

Saturday 21st August

We are glad to say that the deportation of our Swazi friend Thobile Gwebu has been halted although she is still in detention.

Thursday 26th August

Vigil Co-ordinator Dumi Tutani was on a panel at a screening of 'Mugabe and the White African' in London on Thursday. Director Lucy Bailey was very pleased to have a black Zimbabwean's views. Dumi stressed that the problems in Zimbabwe were not caused by the white farmers and the land issue but by a corrupt government determined to stay in power at all costs.

Saturday 18th September

- **Protest to mark the second anniversary of the signing of the Zimbabwean Global Political Agreement.** Comrade Mugabe – despite reports of ill-health – was fit enough to join our demonstration outside the South African High Commission.

But mentally he seems to have lost it, judging by the mis-spellings in the poster he was carrying: 'SADC Final: Mugabwe 10, Zumabwe 0'. But the scornful message was clear. The demonstration marked the expiry of the 30-day deadline given by SADC for the leaders of the unity government to settle the issues outstanding from the Global Political Agreement signed two years ago this month.

- We were happy to be joined by our Swazi friend and supporter Thobile Gwebu just released from detention.

Saturday 25th September

During the week the Vigil sent the following message to the South American so-called Anglican cleric who invited Mugabe to Ecuador to receive an honorary doctorate. 'Dear Revd Dr Walter Roberto Crespo: the Zimbabwe Vigil wishes to add our support to Genocide Watch in protest at your proposal to honour Robert Mugabe . . .'

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Saturday 2nd October

Vigil team member Sue Toft arranged, at St Mary's Church, Speldhurst, Kent, a showing of the film 'Mugabe and the White African' which documents the fight by white farmer Ben Freeth and his father-in-law to stop their farm being taken by Mugabe's regime.

In the audience was Ben's mother Claire Freeth.

Zimbabwe Vigil's 8th Anniversary – Saturday 9th October

- Robert Mugabe drinking coffee out of an MDC mug and pouring in spoonfuls of salt was the centrepiece of our 8th anniversary Vigil – until he fell asleep. Featuring our well-used Mugabe mask, it was prompted by a report that Mugabe hadn't been able to taste the difference between sugar and salt at a recent reception for diplomats in Harare – and a picture of him fast asleep at the UN (along with some of his 79 companions!).

- Supporters gathered after the Vigil at the nearby Bell and Compass pub to discuss the way forward. Our discussions were informally chaired by Ephraim Tapa, founder member of the Vigil and President of ROHR. One subject discussed was the suggestion by the influential UK weekly *The Economist* that targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his gang should be suspended if they agree to allow international monitors to supervise the promised elections.

Saturday 16th October

The banners we have been displaying outside the London Embassy for eight years inspired posters we attached to luggage to represent the feared consequences of deportation hanging over failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers: 'Back to Murder, Rape and Torture in Zimbabwe' and

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'Back to Mugabe and Starvation'. Given Morgan Tsvangirai's nauseating love-ins with Mugabe over the past 20 months, Vigil supporters were not surprised by the British government's decision to end the moratorium on returning failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe. Whether Tsvangirai is currently flipping or flopping makes no difference now: he has been telling the world that the GNU is working and that Zimbabwe is a safe place so we could hardly expect any other decision by the British government.

Saturday 23rd October

Supporters signed the following petition to the Home Secretary, Theresa May: 'We the undersigned, members of the Zimbabwean Diaspora in the UK and sympathisers, express our grave disquiet at the UK government's announcement that failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers are to be deported – even before the hearing of a test (country guidance) case is concluded . . .'

Sunday 24th October

MEDIA NOTICE – Zimbabweans in UK say 'Don't send us back to Mugabe'.

Zimbabwean exiles in the UK are to stage a demonstration against deportations at a meeting to be addressed by a senior Home Office official at Lancaster House in London on Wednesday, 27th October.

Ephraim Tapa, a prominent Zimbabwean human rights activist in the UK, said 'It is deeply disturbing that the British government seems to have predetermined the outcome of the court case.'

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We did not expect this in the UK.'

Mr Tapa was sceptical about the findings of a British mission to Zimbabwe this year which found that 'Zimbabwe is for many people a safer and better place to live than it was in 2008'. Mr Tapa said 'the stolen elections of 2008 were drenched in blood. New elections are planned for next year and we expect similar bloodshed unless peacekeepers are sent to the country'.

No Returns before Elections! – Wednesday 27th October

About 300 Zimbabweans gathered at Lancaster House for a meeting to hear a senior Home Office official Phil Douglas answer questions on the sudden ending of the four year moratorium on sending home failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers. He dismissed fears that the move would influence the decision of a team of judges presently considering the Zimbabwe country guidance case. Few of his audience were satisfied by his explanations. There was laughter when Mr Douglas said that returned people could relocate to different areas. Many people expressed fears of renewed violence during next year's elections. There was a cry of 'blood on your hands'.

The British government team suggested that Zimbabwean concerns about the policy should be channelled through an organisation of their creation, the Zimbabwe Diaspora Focus Group.

The Zimbabwe Vigil / ROHR's views are that they do not want to be represented by any other group and this was reaffirmed at a briefing after the meeting to the large group of Zimbabweans who had waited patiently outside. Mr Douglas agreed to accept our petition and hand it on.

Wednesday 10th November

Meeting on Zimbabwe at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House. If the British government has any strategy to ensure that the promised elections in Zimbabwe are free and fair it is not letting on. That's the conclusion reached by Vigil supporters who attended a meeting at the Chatham House think-tank in London addressed by the Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, and the British Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mark Canning . . .

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It was, all in all, a chilling experience of backslapping hypocrisy. Diplomacy used to be defined as being sent abroad to lie for your country.

Now you only have to go to Chatham House in St James Square.

Further light on the meeting was cast when we learnt that an honoured guest was Zanu-PF's Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi. A firm supporter of the army's involvement in politics, Mzembi was delighted by the supine gushing of Canning and Bellingham.

Monday 15th November

Vigil supporter Josephine Zhuga addressed a meeting in London of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. They are keen to involve Zimbabweans in their Voices of African Women campaign.

Friday 26th November

The ZimVigil TV website (www.zimvigilTV.com) was launched on Friday. Thanks to Dr Tim Rusike of ZBN News who set it up for us. The website will be managed by a team selected by the Vigil and has space for videos, picture gallery, community area and blog.

Saturday 4th December

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It was good to be visited by Judith Todd, the Zimbabwean human rights champion, who was briefly in London. She said how encouraged she was that we were still going and how she looked forward to reading our diary every week.

Friday 10th December

Vigil supporters took part in an event at City and Islington College to mark Human Rights Day. We are much sought after for events like this – for our singing and dancing apart from anything else.

Saturday 11th December

The day began well when we received a large box of money. Always welcome. The box came from an anonymous donor with the message: 'We heard your protest vigil needed some money – enjoy'. The message continued 'proudly printed in Zimbabwe and smuggled out to you by some brave friends'. It seems that Mugabe's personal bonker has started a new bank, the Reverse Bank. We now have a pile of new billion, trillion and zillion dollar notes all with pictures of Gono and Grace.

Saturday 18th December 2010

Snow fell steadily in London during the morning and it was impossible to bring the Vigil

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paraphernalia by car. So for the first time ever we had to have a skeleton Vigil: no drums, tables etc – just the bare necessities, such as our banners reading: ‘No to Mugabe, No to Starvation’ and ‘End Murder, Rape and Torture in Zimbabwe’.