

Saturday 21st July

Russian diplomats peeping out from behind the curtains of their London Embassy must have been surprised to see President Mugabe at a demonstration against Moscow's reported plans to supply helicopter gunships in return for Zimbabwean platinum deposits. Mugabe – in the form of Vigil management team member Fungayi Mabhunu wearing our Mugabe mask – was carrying a poster reading 'I want a Russian helicopter'. The demo caused quite a security stir as the embassy is in a sensitive location near Kensington Palace. There was a heavy police presence with appropriately enough a helicopter overhead.

It is with great sadness that the Vigil reports the death of Bernard Hukwa, a faithful supporter who was also a member of our sister organization ROHR and the MDC. His body was found in the Thames. We know he was worried about being unable to support his family in Zimbabwe.

Saturday 4th August

The European Union's new friend Robert Mugabe popped up at the Vigil on Olympic 'Super Saturday' to display his array of gold medals. Mugabe was given a 'wild' card entry to the Games following the EU's announcement that sanctions were being eased. But he was still not satisfied with his haul: gold medals for Men's Skulls, Rowing (backwards), Shooting, Torture, Genocide and Looting – as well, of course, as the COPAC marathon, which involves 3.5 years going nowhere. Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu for sporting our Mugabe mask.

Tuesday [21st August](#)

Vigil Highlights: July – December 2012

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 12 January 2013 22:07 -

Zimbabwean exiles demonstrated outside the Mozambique High Commission in London to urge the new SADC Chair, Mozambican President Guebuza, to keep up pressure to secure free and fair elections in Zimbabwe next year. The demonstration was part of the 21st Movement Free Zimbabwe Global Campaign which has seen protests around the 21st of each month since January. A letter was handed over to a Mozambican official by nine year old Leslie Nkanyezi representing the demonstrators from the MDC, the Vigil, ROHR and the Zimbabwe We Can (ZWC) movement. The letter noted: ‘

We are pleased to see that the summit in Maputo reaffirmed the decisions already taken on Zimbabwe but we see little evidence of urgency in the summit resolutions, particularly in preparing the ground so that the elections will be free and fair.’

Saturday 1st September

Vigil supporters gathered after our weekly protest outside the Embassy for a wide-ranging discussion of the threatening situation in Zimbabwe and the Vigil’s role in the fight for freedom and democracy. Our monthly Action Forum thought almost unanimously that the MDC was unlikely to be in charge after the next election. Questions were asked why the MDC had allowed itself to be seduced by the ludicrous constitution-making process while nothing had been done to ensure free and fair elections. We have Tendai Biti touring the world expressing his admiration for Mugabe and saying how the economy is poised to power ahead. Yet now he tells a luxurious conference at the Victoria Falls that Zimbabwe has a per capita annual income of about \$320.

Our meeting noted that Professor David Hulme of Manchester University had told the Victoria Falls conference that Zimbabwe had seen one of the biggest declines in human and economic development recorded among countries not in a war situation.

Wednesday 5th September

Vigil members attended a meeting at Parliament called to discuss the deteriorating situation in Swaziland. We were there to support the Swaziland Vigil during a week of activism coinciding

with Swaziland's Independence Day on 6th September.

Saturday 8th September

On the second last day of the Paralympics, Vigil supporters saw off President Mugabe in the Marathon. He only agreed to take part if he was promised the gold medal and he insisted that we give it to him before the race to make sure. He also demanded to start a day before the opposition, given that he is about the oldest contender in the dictator stakes. Furthermore, he insisted on starting at the Embassy which is only a short distance to the finishing line in the nearby Mall. Thanks to Fungayi Mabhunu for playing Marathon Mugabe wearing our mask.

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Saturday 15th September

Mugabe's intolerant comments about Jamaican Rastafarians (as our poster put it 'Mugabe's message to Jamaica: stop da ganja man and da strong drink and cut the hair') opened the eyes of Caribbeans to his true character. We have had endless discussions with our brothers in the British Caribbean community over the past 10 years but they have been firmly fixed on an unreal picture of Mugabe as a warrior for African liberation. Now they have been kicked in the groin by their hero's feet of clay. A dreadlocked mask of Mugabe puffing a giant spliff featured prominently at the Vigil, where he welcomed the arrival of Tsvangirai's rival brides by rickshaw. Mugabe then handed them to a kneeling Tsvangirai with a placard reading 'Morgan's Zanu PF brides'.

Saturday 22nd September

As the Vigil's contribution to the Zimbabwe Diaspora 21st Movement's Global Campaign, we took letters to the Tanzanian and Botswana High Commissions in London. Our letter to President Kikwete of Tanzania noted: 'Your predecessor, Julius Nyerere, told Mugabe that he was inheriting the jewel of Africa. At that time Zimbabwe had the second most advanced economy in sub-Saharan Africa. Now after 32 years of Mugabe's misrule it is one of the poorest and most corrupt countries.' The letter to President Khama of Botswana said: 'We applaud your comments at a recent banquet in Gaborone for President Zuma that "nothing less than free and fair elections in Zimbabwe should be acceptable to the international community".

One of our members has contacted her relatives in Bulawayo to find out how they are getting on with synchronized toilet flushing. We have asked them to let us know when it's happening so we can flush our toilets in sympathy.

Saturday 29th September

After reading our last diary, a leading MDC figure in the UK, while thanking us for our help, complained that we were again criticizing the MDC. Here is our reply: 'We would like to assure you that we are not against the MDC. But we feel an obligation to be critical when the leadership is failing the party's members. To do otherwise would be following the example of Zanu PF . . . the Vigil applauds the many MDC members working bravely and unselfishly for change. Without the support of these members the party would not exist. They and you have every right, if not a duty, to criticize the leadership when it fails.'

Saturday 6th October

Thanks to the BBC and others picking up our Bulawayo lavatory 'scoop', we have helped launch the prospective Olympic sport of 'synchronised toilet flushing'.

[Zimbabwe Vigil's 10th Anniversary – Saturday 13th October](#)

Today marked the beginning of our 11th year outside the Embassy in line with the mission statement we adopted in 2002: 'The Vigil, outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, 429 Strand, London, takes place every Saturday from 14.00 to 18.00 to protest against gross violations of human rights in Zimbabwe. The Vigil will continue until internationally-monitored, free and fair elections are held in Zimbabwe.' Today was certainly no celebration as our objectives are far from being achieved.

The protest has been described by the Observer newspaper as the largest regular demonstration in London. Attendance has ranged from a handful to more than 300. Petitions signed by hundreds of thousands of passers-by have been submitted to the UK government, the UN, the EU, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community etc.

We went on after the Vigil down the road to the India Club in the Aldwych where, Ephraim Tapa, one of the founder members of the Vigil, chaired a meeting to discuss the way forward. He mentioned the BBC interview this week given by the Zanu PF Justice Minister Chinamasa in which he made it clear that Zanu PF will never hand over power. Many people expressed despair at the situation at home. The meeting ended troubled and uncertain but with determination to continue the Vigil until our objectives are achieved.

Saturday 20th October

On the eve of the 2nd Stakeholders' Meeting on the new constitution, Zimbabweans exiled in the UK gathered outside the Zimbabwe Embassy to underline our fears that this ludicrous process would again be hijacked by Zanu PF. The gathering was part of the 10th round of monthly demonstrations by the Free Zimbabwe Global Diaspora 21st

Movement. A petition was drawn up on the spot and signed by participants, including many MDC members as well as Vigil and ROHR supporters, and slipped under the Embassy's front door. It said: 'We deplore the upsurge in political violence and the arbitrary arrests of opposition members and warn you that we will continue our campaign until there are free and fair elections.'

Saturday 27th October

ROHR Central London Branch was launched today. An interim committee was elected with Fungayi Mabhunu of the Vigil as Chair. Participants felt that ROHR Central London would have a pivotal and challenging campaigning role in the UK capital where government headquarters and foreign embassies are based.

Saturday 3rd November

Vigil Highlights: July – December 2012

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Saturday, 12 January 2013 22:07 -

A UK daily newspaper The Independent asked the Vigil to write a blog explaining what has kept us going for the past decade. Here it is: <http://blogs.independent.co.uk/2012/11/06/the-zimbabwe-vigils-10th-anniversary-is-no-cause-for-celebration/>

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Tuesday 6th November

Several Vigil management team members attended a meeting in Parliament addressed by Ben Freeth who, together with his father-in-law Mike Campbell, successfully took Mugabe to the SADC International Court after they were evicted from their farm. The Tribunal was then suspended after pressure from Mugabe. The meeting was also addressed by the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, and the exiled MDC T Treasurer Roy Bennett who said 'There needs to be a clean break with the past in Zimbabwe very soon or the country will be a permanent basket case like the Democratic Republic of Congo or Somalia.'

Saturday 10th November

Ben Freeth joined us at the Vigil and urged us to keep up the struggle: 'We are encouraged because every week we see you are still there', he said. After the Vigil Ben attended the monthly meeting of the Zimbabwe Action Forum where he said huge problems continue at home and no real reforms were taking place. He said our partner organization Restoration of Human Rights was part of the answer.

Saturday 17th November

Vigil Highlights: July – December 2012

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 12 January 2013 22:07 -

In the past week the Vigil received a sudden surge of calls from Zimbabweans in detention facing possible deportation.

Wednesday 21st November

Vigil and MDC supporters delivered a petition to the Zimbabwe Embassy demanding transparency in Zimbabwe's diamond sales. It was part of the monthly demonstrations held by the diaspora around the world. Although it was a working day, the Embassy's front doors were closed so we slipped our petition under the door.

Saturday 1st December

Vigil management team member Josephine Zhuga had happy news for us today. After a long battle – when she was told her papers had been lost – she has finally been granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Lindy Bare and Philip Maponga, who played the roles of Tsvangirai and his new wife Elizabeth in our mock wedding on 15th September, announced that they are to get married. They had never met before our event.

Saturday 8th December

Vigil Highlights: July – December 2012

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Saturday, 12 January 2013 22:07 -

Our sister organization the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) met in Birmingham to elect a new executive. Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa, who set up ROHR in 2007, was confirmed as Chair. The conference resolved to relaunch programmes in Zimbabwe and start operations in South Africa. Signatures were collected for a petition to the UK Border Agency protesting at the treatment of Zimbabwean deportees.

Saturday 22nd December

On the shortest Saturday of the year, with darkness falling before 4 pm, and floods reported from many parts of the UK, we gathered in the rain to sing and dance outside the South African High Commission to petition President Zuma for tough action against Mugabe. The demonstration was part of the 21

st

Movement Global Protest launched in January which has seen monthly demonstrations by the diaspora under the banner 'Reclaim Zimbabwe'. The petition to President Zuma had been signed by 5,000 people who have stopped at the Vigil outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in recent months.