

Vigil founder member Ephraim Tapa, who has just returned from an undercover fact-finding visit to Zimbabwe, says he believes the result of the referendum on a new constitution was rigged. Ephraim, a former leader of the Civil Service Employees Union, has not been home since he was given political asylum in the UK after being tortured and fleeing Zimbabwe in 2002.

He said: 'A day before the referendum I got to talk to a young man in his mid-twenties in Mwenezi, Masvingo. He told me that he and the wider community had never seen the draft constitution let alone read it and that they had been ordered to vote 'Yes' by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Apart from ZEC they had seen no one else. He said he would not be voting for something he was not sure of. These sentiments were echoed by almost everyone I spoke to'.

He went on: 'I was able to visit a number of polling stations on the day of the referendum. Short queues formed in the mid-morning and by the afternoon hardly any were left. In the following days I was able to ask several households how many people had voted in the referendum and results indicated widespread apathy. They stated that they couldn't vote for something that they were not privy to. Prior to the vote, parts of civil society that campaigned for the 'NO' vote had been deliberately targeted for arbitrary arrest and harassment by police'.

Ephraim said ZEC's report of an unprecedented high voter turnout was now being disputed by both civil society and the MDC-T and its cooking of the figures was an indicator of things to come. Ephraim, one of the founders of the MDC, said he was asked to meet several groups of prospective MDC parliamentary candidates. They were doubtful of the MDC winning the elections although they did not expect violence on the same scale as 2008. But people were being intimidated and reminded all the time of the 2008 violence as a warning of what could happen again.

He said people felt betrayed by the former progressive voices, including MDC T, who had acquiesced in human rights abuses and lack of reform. They had lost hope and now didn't talk about politics at all, just bread and butter issues. 'They don't want to go through 2008 again'.

The Vigil is alarmed by the alacrity with which the outside world has welcomed the bogus referendum figures. The United States, for instance, has congratulated Zimbabwe for holding a

Referendum rigged – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 6th April 2013

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 07 April 2013 21:56 - Last Updated Sunday, 07 April 2013 21:56

'successful' referendum – in the face of a damning report on 'systematic' political oppression in Zimbabwe by the Robert Kennedy Centre (see: RFK Center: Zimbabwe Electoral Conditions Severely Compromised – http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/apr4_2013.html#Z6).

After the Vigil, people gathered for the bi-monthly Zimbabwe Action Forum at which we discussed Ephraim's report (<http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/vigil-news/campaign-news/487-report-on-trip-to-southern-africa--ephraim-tapa->). It was agreed to urge the MDC not to join a new government of national looting. If it insisted on doing so a new political party should be formed to provide real opposition. Ephraim was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting because of the launch in Leeds of a new branch of ROHR of which he is President.

But he will be answering questions at our next ZAF meeting on 20th April.

Other points

- Anyone who doubts Zanu PF's intentions should look at the BBC's Hard Talk interview with Chinamasa during his recent visit to London – what an ugly face to present to the outside world: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b01rp3x4/HARDtalk_Patrick_Chinamasa_Justice_Minister_of_Zimbabwe/ .

- The need for political change in Zimbabwe was stressed by Vigil regular Louisa Musaerenge who drew our attention to a piece in the Zimbabwean (http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/apr4_2013.html#Z15 – Why I will vote for MDC).

- Once again the Vigil has linked up family members. Management team member Fungayi Mabhunu got talking to Rosemary Maponga and they discovered that his uncle was married to her aunt in Rusape.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website – they cannot be downloaded from the slideshow on the front page of the Zimvigil website.

FOR THE RECORD: 37 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Official Launch of Betty Makoni story: Never again, not to any woman or girl again.**

Saturday 13

th

April from 5 pm – 12 midnight.

Venue: Thurrock Hotel, Ship Lane, Purfleet, Essex RM19 1YN. For more information

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email:

gcnworldwide@gmail.com

, or

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hone: 07427 774 415 / 07951 522 790.

- **Round 16 of the Free Zimbabwe Global Campaign (FZGC).** Saturday 20th April when we will also mark Zimbabwe's Independence Day.

- **Zimbabwe Action Forum (ZAF).** Saturday 20th April from 6.30 – 9.30 pm. ROHR President Ephraim Tapa, recently back from Southern Africa, will talk to us about his trip. Venue: Strand Continental Hotel (first floor lounge), 143 Strand, London WC2R 1JA. The Strand is the same road as the Vigil. 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 big sign high above and a sign for its famous Indian restaurant at street level. It's next to a newsagent. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn.

- **Zimbabwe Vigil Highlights 2012** can be viewed on this link: <http://www.zimvigil.co.uk/the-vigil-diary/467-vigil-highlights-2012>

Links to previous years' highlights are listed on 2012 Highlights page.

- **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 the views and opinions of ROHR.

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

- **Vigil Myspace page:** <http://www.myspace.com/zimbabwevigil> ...

- **Useful websites:** www.zanupfcrime.com which reports on Zanu PF abuses and www.ipaidabribe.org.zw

where people can report corruption in Zimbabwe.