

Stop bankrolling Mugabe's friends.

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 07 October 2008 19:19 - Last Updated Monday, 27 October 2008 23:23

Zimbabweans in UK tell EU: "Stop bankrolling Mugabe's friends."

European Union countries have been urged to suspend government-to-government aid to members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) because of their failure to help the desperate people of Zimbabwe.

On Saturday, 11th October, Glenys Kinnock MEP will attend the Zimbabwe Vigil outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London to accept a petition signed by thousands of people who have passed by the Vigil in the Strand. Mrs Kinnock is Co-President of the African, Caribbean and Pacific / EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and has taken a close interest in the situation in Zimbabwe.

The event marks the 6th anniversary of the Vigil, which has been held outside the Embassy every Saturday since 12th October 2002 in protest against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. It has been described by the Observer as the largest regular demonstration in London.

The petitions reads: **"A Petition to European Union Governments. We record our dismay at the failure of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to help the desperate people of Zimbabwe at their time of trial. We urge the UK government and the European Union in general to suspend government-to-government aid to all 14 (now 15) SADC countries until they abide by their joint commitment to uphold human rights in the region. We suggest that the money should instead be used to feed the starving in Zimbabwe."**

The Vigil condemns SADC for recognising Mugabe as President when SADC's own election observers criticised the polls this year as deeply flawed. Mugabe consequently feels free to disregard a power-sharing deal signed last month despite the deepening humanitarian crisis. The UN says that about half the population will need food aid by early next year.

The Vigil wants the money saved by our proposal – and it amounts to many hundreds of millions of pounds a year – to be used to finance refugee camps in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique to which Zimbabweans can flee for their lives without fear of

Stop bankrolling Mugabe's friends.

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 07 October 2008 19:19 - Last Updated Monday, 27 October 2008 23:23

prompting more xenophobic violence. The money would fund shelter, medicine and education no longer available in Zimbabwe.

Vigil Co-ordinator Rose Benton said: "We do not see why the British taxpayer, should, for instance, give more than £60 million this year to Malawi, whose President struts around on a stolen farm in Zimbabwe and who has named a new highway after his hero Robert Mugabe."

Mrs Benton explained: "We're not of course, calling for a halt to humanitarian aid to the regionfood, medicine etc. What we are talking about is balance of payments support which often goes astray. We believe SADC has failed to live up to its basic responsibilities and must share the pain of Zimbabwe as it becomes the country of the dead, the dying and Mugabe's Zanu-PF Party. We are grateful that Botswana and Zambia have recently begun to protest about what is happening but our proposal will benefit them in relieving their refugee burden."

Event: Zimbabwe Vigil's 6th Anniversary

Venue: Outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, 429 Strand, London WC2

Date / time: 2 pm – 6 pm, Saturday, 11th October 2008. Mrs Kinnock will arrive at around 3.30 pm. The petition will be presented at around 4 pm.

Further information: Contact Rose Benton (07970 996 003, 07932 193 467), Dumi Tutani (07960 039 775), Ephraim Tapa (07940 793 090)