

# NATIONAL POST

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## Canada rejects Zimbabwe "election" results

Bal Brach, Canwest News Service



Kazuhiro Nogi/Getty Images

OTTAWA -- Canada's newly appointed Foreign Affairs minister condemned the actions of Robert Mugabe's regime and rejected the results of the so called "election" in Zimbabwe.

David Emerson said Sunday the Canadian government will "seriously restrict its relationship with the Government of Zimbabwe," after an election process which observers said was scarred by violence and intimidation.

Mr. Mugabe was the only candidate in Friday's election and went ahead with the vote despite a wave of international censure.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew a week ago saying a systematic campaign of violence, which killed nearly 90 of his followers, had made a free and fair vote impossible.

The electoral commission said Mr. Mugabe won 85.51 percent of the vote. He had 43.2 percent in elections in March which Tsvangirai won with 47.9 percent -- short of the absolute majority needed for a first-round victory.

Canada now joins a growing list of countries criticizing Mr. Mugabe's regime.

"The Government of Zimbabwe's systematic use of violence and intimidation represents a grave violation of human rights and democratic principles," Mr. Emerson said in a statement.

"The citizens of Zimbabwe have been denied the opportunity to shape their future through free and fair elections, and they remain in constant danger of intimidation, injury and loss of life," he added.

"Canada does not consider the result of the June 27 election to be, by any reasonable standard of democracy, a credible outcome. This 'election' is illegitimate and will not be accepted by the Government of Canada."

The harsh words by Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister will be followed with swift action against senior Zimbabwean government officials and restrictions on air travel, according to the statement.

Along with imposing travel, work and study bans on senior Zimbabwean government officials and their family members, Mr. Emerson said any aircraft registered in Zimbabwe will not be allowed to

land in or fly over Canada.

On Friday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Canada supports an UN Security Council statement declaring the election undemocratic. Mr. Harper called it an "ugly perversion of democracy."

Meanwhile, The United States, says it is also preparing new sanctions. U.S President George W. Bush said last week the election "appeared to be a sham."

Queen Elizabeth stripped Mr. Mugabe of his knighthood, while European leaders threatened to ramp up sanctions against Zimbabwe.

After taking the oath of office Sunday, 84-year old Mugabe appealed for "unity" and called for dialogue between the country's political parties.

No African heads of state were present for the inauguration, unlike previous election victories.

Mr. Mugabe is Africa's oldest head of state and has ruled the former British colony since independence in 1980.

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