

Zimbabwe's Mugabe says those doubting his election can 'go hang' (+video)
On national 'Heroes Day,' the man who has ruled Zimbabwe for 33 years tells his rivals off, as many worry about political and economic revenge.

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BOSTON-

[Robert Mugabe](#) today told those challenging his July 31 re-election to get lost or worse, and not to waste his time with courts and the law.

“Those who can’t stomach the defeat, you can commit suicide. Even dogs will not sniff their carcass,” Mr. Mugabe piquantly told a [Zimbabwe](#) veterans group, according to CNN.

Mugabe, a former liberation leader turned dictator, has held tight control of Zimbabwe for 33 years and on the last day of July in a long delayed national vote, appeared to win a resounding 61 percent.



Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe addresses the crowd gathered to commemorate Heroes Day in Harare, August 12. Mugabe told critics of his disputed re-election to 'go hang' on Monday, dismissing his rivals as 'Western-sponsored stooges.' -Philimon Bulawayo/Reuters

Today he swept aside court challenges that his election was fraudulent – even as many in Zimbabwe are bracing for a return of one-party rule in Zimbabwe that could see banks, land, mines, churches, and other properties expropriated as in earlier periods of Mugabe rule.

Today is “Heroes Day,” a kind of Fourth of July for Zimbabwe, and Mugabe told veterans of the 1970s independence struggle that his political rivals can “go

hang.”

“Those who were hurt by defeat can go hang if they so wish,” he said, according to the BBC.

Last week [Morgan Tsvangirai](#), Mugabe’s chief political opponent, filed a case of voter fraud that centered partly on the fact that no voter rolls were given to the

opposition until the day of the election, and that the rolls that were given were in paper, not digitized in a way that made checking their veracity possible.

Mr. Tsvangirai and his party cite the Zimbabwe Election Commission, the official agency that declared Mugabe the winner, which reports that some 300,000 people were turned away from voting, mostly in urban areas, and that more than 200,000 were “assisted” in voting.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network, a watchdog group, says more than 850,000 votes were not recorded.

It was unclear whether Tsvangirai will have enough traction in the courts in [Harare](#) for his election fraud claims.

Indeed, Mugabe can point to the African Union assessment that the vote was “free and peaceful,” even though this was a revision of their earlier assessment of “free and fair.”

The government of Botswana, however, broke ranks with other southern African nations to say the election seemed clearly rigged – an assessment shared by the British and American governments, among others, who were not allowed to observe.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said that “in light of substantial electoral irregularities reported by domestic and regional observers, the United States does not believe that the results announced today represent a credible expression of the will of the Zimbabwean people.”

Yet a number of Zimbabwe experts have also said that even without irregularities, Tsvangirai and his Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party were far less potent and popular than in 2008 – when they won the popular vote – and had essentially been unable to focus effectively on this election.

The July 31 election date was chosen by Mugabe and contested by Tsvangirai and other parties on the grounds that serious election reforms had not been implemented. A Mugabe-selected constitutional court upheld the July 31 date.

Meanwhile, many Zimbabweans are awaiting clarification on policies promised by Mugabe that would, like earlier “land reform” programs that chased whites off of their farms, grab banks and lucrative mines and put them under 51 percent black national ownership.

Some churches have also said they worry about a new crackdown on their holdings.

As the Monitor reported Aug. 10:

The atmosphere in Zimbabwe after the reelection of strongman Robert Mugabe is not one of great celebration, but of tension.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, the main challenger, says he will not join in a new governing coalition but is contesting the credibility of the July 31 vote in court.

Fears are on the rise in the capital of Harare, reports say, that under one-party rule, a host of Mr. Mugabe’s old partners, cronies, henchmen, and friends will start to come out of the woodwork to take advantage of the hour.

Foreign-owned banks, mines, and businesses have heard that, to fulfill a campaign promise made by Mugabe, their assets may be seized and restructured into a majority national ownership arrangement.

Now it appears the considerable property of the Anglican church in Zimbabwe, though it is mostly a black membership, may also be under renewed scrutiny by the unscrupulous.

The chief Anglican bishop in Zimbabwe, Chad Gandiya, this week accused a renegade clergyman and friend of Mugabe of restarting a campaign using brutality, the courts, and police to seize churches, orphanages, and missions owned by mainstream Anglicans.

Mr. Gandiya told the Associated Press that [Nolbert Kunonga](#), a defrocked bishop who stumped for Mugabe and last week called him a leader “sent from God,” is using the emotion around the landslide vote as an opportunity to seize property associated with the Church of England.

Several years ago Mr. Kunonga, who is US educated and has told The New York Times that he is a “superior person” to the other members of the Anglican clergy, began by legal and extralegal means to take over church properties, including the cathedral of Harare.

Gandiya told reporters that Kunonga this week sent thugs into his own home in Harare, where they stole cellphones and records of church holdings and personnel.

Gandiya also said that in the area of Murewa, outside Harare, local police are supporting Kunonga's effort to take over a mission, and to [evict 100 children from the Shearly Cripps orphanage](#), first started by British and American missionaries.

Anglican clergy and assets have been under attack in Zimbabwe for years as part of Mugabe's long standing tryst with the West and its institutions of influence.

Mugabe is a Roman Catholic but has sought and found alliances with those in other faiths, like Kunonga, who share his anti-Western ideology.

But now, on the heels of a contested "landslide" election where Mugabe promised to expand "reform" policies that earlier led to evictions of white farmers from their land, a variety of Protestant and Catholic churches, despite being largely black, are again worried.

Officials from Mugabe's Zanu PF party spoke this Tuesday of instituting new forms of "wealth transfer."

Foreign-owned mines and banks are worth an estimated \$9 billion in value.

So the limited Zimbabwe religious blogosphere is taking notice of the behavior of Kunonga, who had been excommunicated in 2007. He formed a splinter church and began to appropriate and "share" Anglican property with the apparent blessing of Mugabe.

Kunonga's splinter church for a time enjoyed standing but is now in legal limbo. But this could change again. Kunonga currently holds, in contravention of a court order, some of the largest Anglican church buildings and edifices in Harare, including the main cathedral, along with bank accounts and vehicles.

He has also developed a reputation for brutality. Two years ago, Kunonga told a New York Times reporter in Harare that [he planned to take over some 3,000 Anglican properties in Africa](#) for his own use and profit.

In the interview, he alluded to the use of violence, saying, "You must have a very good reason to kill people. Being a political scientist, I know who to eliminate if I wanted to physically, and to make it effective. I'm a strategist."

He added that, "If I want to pick on people to kill, Gandiya would not survive here."

The head of the Anglican church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has said he is seeking a visit to speak with Mugabe about the issue.

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