

Democratic Republic of Congo
Hon. David Kilgour
Message to Congolese-Canadians
Parliament Hill
16 February 2012
Ottawa

Permit me to apologize for my ineffective advocacy to date in the many important causes in the DRC that bring us all here today. In hindsight, I could have worked more effectively, as Marc Kapenda, Oscar Boloko, Eric Schiller and so many others here today have done over the years, to help improve the lives of the Congolese people.

In late 1984, as parliamentary secretary to then CIDA Minister, I was sent as an official Canadian representative at the re-inauguration of President Mobutu. Later I realized that all Canada's government was doing was to provide yet another imprimatur for the further continuation in office of a brutal and corrupt dictator.

In visits to Kinshasa and elsewhere in the country since as Secretary of State for Africa, I accomplished really nothing in terms of the rule of law, democratic governance and reducing violence and poverty for the long-suffering people of Congo. Later, I met with the younger President Kabilla while he was in New York, but nothing changed in terms of implementing universal values across your homeland.

I'd urge all of you to watch the two videos listed below to understand the enormities of the human rights abuses that continue today across the DRC:

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uFjJDcBmKc&feature=related>
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKcNQMxw4_w&feature=related

November 28 elections

Anita Vandenburg and Eric Shiller were Canadian observers of the Nov 28 (2011) presidential and parliamentary elections in the DRC. They have indicated the following at a presentation last month:

Vandenburg

- The Catholic church of the DRC-with 30,000 observers- the Carter Centre and other independent observers concluded that the elections were neither free nor fair.

- The enthusiasm for democracy among the Congolese people was noticeably high. When, for example, someone entered one of the polling stations with 2000 ballots pre-marked for Kabilla, citizens quickly stopped the attempted cheating.
- We outsiders must stop supporting representative democracy only when it produces governments we like.
- The head of the National Election Commission was a relative/friend of Kabilla. and
- The international community invested about \$150 million in the DRC election.

Schiller:

- The DRC is now the worst place on earth to be born, being 174 out of 174 on the UN Human Development Index.
- Each hour, 45 women and girls are raped,
- MPs are paid the equivalent of \$6000 monthly,
- The UN mission in Congo (MONUC) has about 20,000 staff across the country, mostly military, and
- One month before the election, Kabilla, knowing the Supreme Court might have to decide election issues, appointed 18 new judges presumably friendly to him.

Friends of the Congolese people are asking if there a way forward for the DRC, or is it now a state which has failed at becoming a democracy, despite the enthusiasm of so many citizens? Should the international community invest in future elections? What should the roles in the future be for MONUC? The international community? Canada?

Requests to Harper Government

In conclusion, permit me to stress the requests in your community's recent letter to Prime Minister Harper: "... Canadian citizens of Congolese origin propose...the following :

- Establish a parliamentary commission in partnership with other parliaments involved in democratizing the DRC to verify the vote counts of all bodies involved: the National Election Commission, the observer missions, the political parties,
- Recognize Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba as president –elect of the DRC as most neutral observers have noted.
- Canada should make its participation in the Francophone Summit conditional on establishing the truth of the vote count.

- Given the size of the vote fraud and falsification in Kabilla's favour, and the violation of fundamental rights, notably those of women, we ask that Canada declare him responsible under international law with the same vigour that it has shown in respect of Syria's dictator Bashar al-Assad
- Support a more efficient MONUC for the protection of civilians, president Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba and the leaders of the opposition, who are now unable to move freely.

Thank you.