

Dutch Government Helping Kagame Rig Election?

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Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Verhagen recently [answered questions \(Google translated\)](#) in Parliament concerning Rwanda's election. (These answers were [published online in Dutch on July 30, 2010.](#))

The rush transcript shows that the Dutch government refutes claims by the Rwandan opposition parties of Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza, Frank Habineza and Bernard Ntaganda that the process so far has been rigged and since July the Dutch government is apparently co-presiding over the [Rwandan National Electoral Commission](#).

The translated answer by Maxime Verhagen which specifically refutes an important claim by the Permanent Consultative Council of Opposition Parties states:

"The claim of the PCC that the independence of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) would only be guaranteed through the participation of opposition is not shared by me. The PCC 'falls over' the fact that the chairman of the NEC is a member of the RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front, Kagame's army and party]. Neutrality, however, is effectively monitored by the co-chair, a donor (The Netherlands). The Netherlands since July 2010 as acting co-chairman of the NEC is co-responsible for setting the agenda and for bringing specific topics to the table. The NEC is directly involved in the process for the adjustment of the electoral law and also responsible for the electoral process. The NEC shall also ensure fairness of the campaign, for example, by checking that the media focus on the current four candidates is distributed evenly. The registration of the presidential candidates was also done at the NEC."

On Frank Habineza, Maxime Verhagen states that the Rwandan Green Party (my translation) "wanted to participate without fulfilling all conditions, which is participating without holding a founding meeting. This is considered contrary to the Rwandan Constitution."

That statement totally ignores the fact that the Rwandan government has made it impossible, through Kafkaesque measures, for the Green Party to hold such a meeting.

The fact that the Dutch government is now a member of the Rwandan NEC merits serious discussion. Has anyone in the world ever seen a foreign government be part of a National Electoral Commission?

To learn how Kagame rigged the 2003 elections, read [here](#).

H. Vincent Harris lives in Belgium, where he explores the impact of migrants on democratic development both at home and abroad at [Colored Opinions](#), where the initial version of this story first appeared.

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