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From humble past, William Ruto sworn in as Kenya's president

Зі скромним минулим, Вільям Руто склав присягу як президент Кенії

Вільям Руто склав присягу як президент Кенії після перемоги на виборах в найстабільнішій демократії Східної Африки, і швидко дав зрозуміти, що його керівництво буде суворо християнським. Верховний суд відхилив апеляційну скаргу програвшого кандидата Раїли Одінга щодо офіційних результатів, завершивши помітно мирні ніж зазвичай вибори. 55-річний В. Руто був заступником колишнього президента Угуру Кеніятта, але мав гіркий розрив, через що вони не спілкувалися місяцями поспіль. Публіка підбадьорювала, коли вони потиснули один одному руки, а потім знову, коли У. Кеніятта передав інструменти влади.

<https://apnews.com/article/africa-kenya-east-uhuru-kenyatta-raila-odinga-848ba39a62c829193538cfbea62a6d6e>



Kenya's new president William Ruto holds up a ceremonial sword as he is sworn in to office at a ceremony held at Kasarani stadium in Nairobi, Kenya Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2022. William Ruto was sworn in as Kenya's president on Tuesday after narrowly winning the Aug. 9 election and after the Supreme Court last week rejected a challenge to the official results by losing candidate Raila Odinga. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — William Ruto was sworn in as Kenya's president on Tuesday after narrowly winning the Aug. 9 election in East Africa's most stable democracy, and quickly signaled that his leadership will be a strongly Christian one.

The Supreme Court last week rejected a challenge by losing candidate and longtime opposition figure Raila Odinga of the official results, completing a markedly peaceful election in a country with a history of troubled ones.

The 55-year-old Ruto had been the deputy to outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta but had a bitter split that left the two not speaking for months at a time. On Tuesday, the audience cheered as the two shook hands, and again as Kenyatta handed over the instruments of power.

Ruto, who had dropped to his knees in tears and prayer when the court upheld his win, knelt on the stage minutes after his swearing-in during an extended sermon.

“A chicken seller to a president,” intoned the pastor, highlighting Ruto’s humble youth. “A village boy has become the president of Kenya,” Ruto said in his speech.

In his first tweet as president, the evangelical Christian quoted Psalms: “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” His speech praised both the church and Islamic leadership, and he vowed that “we will enhance our partnership, build on our collaboration and enhance our support to them.”

The event began with some chaos. Scores of people were crushed and injured as they forced their way into the packed stadium. Medic Peter Muiruri said a fence fell as people pushed it and about 60 were injured, though the number may rise.

People tried to dodge baton-wielding security forces. Some failed. “I was beaten by the police after trying to get inside,” said a witness, Benson Kimutai.

Ruto takes power in a country heavily burdened by debt that will challenge his efforts to fulfill sweeping campaign promises made to Kenya’s poor, whom he has described as getting by on “stubborn hope.” In his speech, he acknowledged that “clearly, we are living beyond our means.”

He promised cheaper fertilizer as food prices rise and more affordable credit. He also vowed more money for the judiciary, financial independence for the national police from the presidency and efforts to fight a drought in Kenya’s north that brings the threat of famine.

Ruto also asked Kenyatta to continue “chairing discussions” on the regional crises in neighboring Ethiopia, where the government is fighting Tigray forces, and in eastern Congo, where tensions exist with Rwanda. Kenyatta has accepted, the new president said.

“Will come as a big relief to diplomats who worried Nairobi would back out of the two initiatives,” tweeted Murithi Mutiga, Africa director with the International Crisis Group.

But Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed didn’t shake hands with other African leaders afterward, even rejecting his Kenyan Foreign Ministry escort, and went straight to his car.

With the transition, Kenya’s presidency moves from one leader indicted by the International Criminal Court to another. Both Kenyatta and Ruto were indicted over their roles in deadly 2007 post-election violence, but the cases were later closed amid allegations of witness intimidation.

The August election was calm in a country with a history of political violence. Chaos [erupted only in the final minutes](#) when the electoral commission publicly split and prominent Odinga supporters tried to physically stop the declaration of Ruto as the winner.

Ruto’s campaign portrayed him as a “hustler” with a humble background of going barefoot and selling chickens by the roadside, a counterpoint to the political dynasties represented by Kenyatta and Odinga. His presidential flag features a wheelbarrow, the symbol of his campaign.

But Ruto received powerful political mentoring as a young man from former President Daniel arap Moi, who oversaw a one-party state for years before Kenyans successfully pushed for multiparty elections.

Ruto now speaks of democracy and has vowed there will be no retaliation against dissenting voices. “I will work with all Kenyans irrespective of who they voted for,” he said in his speech.

But in a warning sign for media, local broadcasters that were accused by Ruto of bias in the past were restricted in their coverage of the inauguration, forced to use a feed from a South African broadcaster in which Kenya’s national broadcaster has a share.

The losing candidate, 77-year-old Odinga, is setting himself up to be a prominent opposition voice once again after former rival Kenyatta backed him in the election. In a statement on Monday, Odinga said he would skip the inauguration and later “announce next steps as we seek to deepen and strengthen our democracy.”

Though Odinga also asserted that “the outcome of the election remains indeterminate,” a spokesperson told The Associated Press it was “highly unlikely” he would seek to declare himself the “people’s president” as he did after losing the 2017 election.

Moses Ndungu contributed to this report.