



RDR

Rassemblement Républicain pour la Démocratie au Rwanda

Republican Rally for Democracy in Rwanda

Ihuliro Rishingiye kuri Repubulika Liharanira Demokarasi mu Rwanda

Pour un Peuple Reconcilié dans un Etat de droit - For a Reconciled People in a Rule of Law
Duharanire Ubwiyunge bw'Abanyarwanda mu Gihugu cyubahiriza Amategeko

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Rwanda: The Partisan Parliament Seeks to Abolish Independent Civil Society Organisations after Successfully Stifling Political Opposition

The RDR condemns once again the political exploitation of the 1994 Tutsi genocide by the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in order to tighten its grip on power and consolidate General Paul Kagame's autocratic rule by eliminating any political opposition to the RPF-led dictatorial government and independent civil society organisations inside Rwanda.

On June 30, 2004, a commission of the RPF-dominated low chamber of the parliament asked the RPF-led government to dissolve the leading independent human rights non-governmental organization in Rwanda, the League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (Ligue Rwandaise pour la promotion et la défense des droits de l'homme, or LIPRODHOR) and other civil society organizations (FOR (Ruhengeri), BAIR (Gisenyi), SDA (Gikongoro), IMBARAGA, Souvenir des Parents (Gasiza-Gisenyi), Abahamya b'Izuka (Muramba - Gisenyi), CRAM). The commission alleged that those non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support "genocidal ideas". However, in reality, the NGOs targeted for dissolution have either voiced concern over RPF's unfair and unpopular practices or resisted its constant attempts to control them or interfere in their internal affairs. The commission also alleged that genocide ideology was widespread at the National University of Rwanda and at secondary schools of Kansi in Butare and of Rebero in Byumba.

The parliamentary commission also called for action against the following international humanitarian organizations active in Rwanda: Norwegian People's Aid, Care International, Trocaire and 11.11.11. They are accused by the commission of supporting local groups labelled as having a "genocide ideology" in the commission's report. The commission also castigated the French and Dutch governments for aiding civil society organizations alleged to have a "genocide ideology."

The commission criticized the Catholic Church of Rwanda, the Free Methodist Church of Rwanda, the Association of Pentecostal Churches in Rwanda and the Episcopal Church of Rwanda for allegedly harbouring genocide ideology and called for the arrest of a number of their Hutu leaders. The RPF has attempted many times to interfere in the internal affairs of the targeted churches in order to control them and transform them into "patriotic" churches. The commission recommended the establishment of a "forum" to govern religious activities similar to the consultative forum of parties, dominated by the RPF, which already supervises the conduct of registered political parties in Rwanda and highly restricts their freedoms to act.

It should be recalled that last year, on April 14, the RPF-controlled Transitional National Assembly also asked the RPF-led government to dissolve the political party Mouvement Démocratique

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Républicain (MDR, Democratic Republican Movement) on the false accusation of propagating a "divisive" ideology when it became clear that the party would not support the RPF's candidate, General Paul Kagame, in upcoming presidential elections and would be a serious challenge to the RPF in upcoming parliamentary elections. The government accepted the request, but the Supreme Court never acted upon the recommendation. The MDR dissolved when all existing political parties were required to reregister under the new law on political parties.

As in many other countries, "genocidal ideas" are prohibited by law in Rwanda. However, the RPF-dominated parliament and the RPF-led government interpret the law on genocide so broadly so as to include any political opposition to, dissent, autonomy or independence from the RPF-led dictatorial government. Those accused by the parliament or the government have no other recourse to challenge false allegations levelled against them because the judiciary is heavily under the influence of the executive in Rwanda. This has led to a fake multiparty system in which all parties are obliged to form a ruling coalition with the RPF and to be, along with the RPF, member of the consultative forum of parties set up by article 56 of the Constitution. No legal political opposition is allowed and there is no place for official opposition in the Rwandan parliament. Political parties which refuse to be mere satellites of the ruling RPF are banned inside Rwanda. Rwanda is a dictatorship with multiple parties.

The RDR asks the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa and other providers of aid to Rwanda to:

- 1 Use all their influence and power to convince or force the RPF-led dictatorial government to not accept the recommendation of the parliament and to cease all harassment of civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations should operate freely in the entire country without the constant control and interference of government agents;
- 2 Condition all flows of aid to the Kigali Government on concrete steps taken to engage in Inter-Rwandan Dialogue with the opposition parties in exile and civil society in order to find political solutions to the Rwandan conflict by peaceful means and on a marked improvement in respect for basic freedoms of association and expression;
- 3 Use all their influence and power to convince or force the Kigali government to take all necessary measures to ensure the efficiency and independence of the judiciary, particularly by ceasing the interference and influence of the executive on the judiciary and the usurpation of the powers of the judiciary by the parliament;
- 4 Demand the unconditional release of Jean Mbanda, Pierre Gakwandi, Pasteur Bizimungu, Charles Ntakirutinka and all other Rwandan political prisoners languishing in jails.

Done at Montreal on 5 July 2004

For the RDR

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