

Excellency Major General Paul Kagame  
President of Republic of Rwanda  
KIGALI - RWANDA

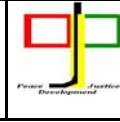
April 26, 2010  
N° 22/RHR/PK/410

Re: Incarceration then release on bail of Mrs. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza;  
Candidate to the Presidential Elections of August 2010 and  
Chairperson of the opposition political party FDU Inkingi.

Excellency;

In the letters No 14/V/PK/210 and No 20/P/PK/310 dated February 8, 2010 and March 20, 2010 respectively, the Organization for Peace, Justice and Development in Rwanda (OPJDR) expressed its concerns about the deterioration of political climate in Rwanda. We highlighted the interference of the government officials especially the Senate and Ministry of Security along with your own party, Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), in preventing the opposition parties to register and operate. Today, we are dismayed by that the situation has not been corrected but has rather worsened with the flight and arrests of high ranking military officers and the incarceration on April 21, 2010, of Mrs. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, candidate to the Presidential elections of August 2010 and Chairperson of the yet-to-be registered opposition political party, United Democratic Forces - FDU Inkingi, has now been released on bail the next day after spending a night in jail.

According to the prosecution, Mrs. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza is accused of negating the Tutsi genocide, promoting ethnic divisionism and having some links with the Rwandan rebels of Rwanda Liberation Democratic Forces, known under the French acronym of FDRL, currently operating in the East of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As usual OPJDR follows with concerns the deterioration of the political climate in Rwanda and deplores these charges against Mrs. Umuhoza are disturbing.



Firstly, upon her arrival in Rwanda on January 16, 2010, Mrs. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza stated that there was Genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994 and that there was also a score of Hutus who have been killed by the Tutsi. She simply asked that all victims of the Rwandan tragedy be remembered as such and wherever possible individuals found to be responsible of those killings be brought to justice and prosecuted, so that the Rwandan people can reconcile based on a solid and sustainable foundation. It is very disturbing if the Rwandan government is led to interpret these words as someone denying the genocide of Tutsi or any word of any double genocide. On April 13, 2010 when officiating the swearing in ceremony of the new Minister of Defense and military chiefs of Rwanda Defense Forces, you personally acknowledged to have killed score of people mainly Hutu when the RPF army dismantled refugee camps in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) starting in 1996. So stating that Hutu have been killed is not a mere statement. Talking about it does not diminish in any way the genocide against the Tutsi or a way to divide Rwandan people. One recalls that several observers of Rwanda's politics have stated over the years that the laws on genocide negation and divisionism are so vague and ill-conceived that Rwanda government uses them to prevent any constructive debate and therefore to silence any dissenting voice. Once again, you personally recently stated that this law needed to be improved to prevent any potential abuse. Clearly, one would question if this indictment of Mrs. Umuhoza is not already one in many of those abuses as she did not break any law in her statement.

Secondly, Mrs. Umuhoza is being accused of having links with Rwandan rebels of FDRL operating in the Eastern part of DRC. The accusation is mainly drawn from a UN contentious report dated November 2009 where it is stated that Mrs. Umuhoza has participated in a meeting called Inter Rwanda Dialogue in 2006 in Barcelona, Spain where FDLR movement was represented. OPJDR would like to recall that not only your party RPF was represented in that meeting but also it is not against any law for Rwandan nationals to meet peacefully to discuss the future of their beloved country. In addition, on April 14, 2010 when opening the East African Community (EAC) Parliament session in Kigali, you dismissed the same UN report, joining your voice to other countries including

Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Uganda that refuted the conclusions of that report upon its release. In addition, the government of Rwanda has for years welcomed high ranking FDRL officers in its ranks including the top military commandants. Just last week, General Jerome Ngendahimana, once leader of FDRL, has been promoted to the Deputy Chief of Staff of Reserve Forces while General Rwarakabije, former Chief of Staff of the FDRL, is currently senior officer in the Rwandan army and Deputy Commissioner of the Demobilization Commission. It is just incomprehensible to see that these former Senior Officers of the FDLR who have never been accused of any wrong doing and being promoted to some of the highest offices in the land by your government on one hand and then on the other hand, it is a grave crime for Mrs. Victoire Ingabire Umuhzo who is accused of crime simply to have sat in an Intra-Rwandan Dialogue gathering where there happened to be representation from FDRL along with other representations from multiple political and civil society organizations including the RPF. It is important to also point that though Mrs. Umuhzo had no part in inviting participants to that meeting, this was a peaceful meeting aimed at seeking a way of a solid foundation for reconciliation and democracy in Rwanda through Dialogue which in our view sound like a noble goal that can only be encouraged by any well wisher of Rwanda's future.

It is clear that there is a lack of consistencies and merit in the charges against Mrs. Umuhzo and OPJDR believes that she is being prosecuted for her political views that may differ of those of the government on some issues. As this looks like an unfair selective and tailored made justice, OPJDR requests that she should be cleared without any conditions of any charge against her and recover all her rights and liberty entitled to any citizen of the country.

There is a general impression that the government does not want to hear a dissenting voice as the presidential elections approach. It is in this line that high ranking senior officers in army have fled the country while others are under arrest, three political opposition parties namely PS Imberakuri, Green Party and FDU Inkingi are being dismantled or prevented to register by the government, two independent newspapers UMUVUGIZI and UMUSESO suspended and their editors on the run, two opposition

political figures are arrested, Deogratias Mushyayidi and Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, and finally the Human Right Watch representative is expelled from the country.

It is clear that the situation is rapidly becoming explosive, and should be out of control if corrective measures are not taken expeditiously. Our organization is convinced that this political climate degradation that seems to be powered by the government, it could, in many respects, lead to an uncontrollable violence similar to the 1994's or even worse.

Therefore, the OPJDR urges you, Excellency Mr. President to, once again work on the right side of Rwanda history by opening up political space, by:

- allowing opposition political parties to register and operate throughout the country
- promoting civil liberties and the rule of law, advocating the expression of a peaceful criticism and dissent voices
- putting in place a free, credible and transparent electoral process.

All these actions will calm down the increasing frustration among a part of the population who feel left out in the management of their country.

We thank you, Excellency Mr. President, for your understanding and cooperation in addressing these grave concerns.

Sincerely

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Coordinator, OPJDR



CC:

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