

STATEMENT ON CRIMINAL CHARGES INSTITUTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA AGAINST THE AUTHORS OF “RWANDA BRIEFING”.

(Issued on behalf of Lt.Gen Kayumba Nyamwasa, Col. Patrick Karegeya
Dr. Gerald Gahima and Dr. Theogene Rudasingwa)

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Three months after we published a document on the political situation in Rwanda entitled “Rwanda Briefing”, President Paul Kagame opted to react to our constructive criticism by instituting criminal proceedings against us instead of adopting reforms to move our country from authoritarian rule.¹ On the 16th November 2010, a Rwandan military court issued summons compelling the four of us to appear before it to answer a wide range of manifestly political charges, including endangering the security of the state, treason, divisionism, establishment of a criminal enterprise and defamation of President Kagame. In addition, Lt General Kayumba and Dr Rudasingwa are accused of desertion from the Rwanda Defence Forces.

While we are not privy to the full particulars of the offences with which we have been charged, we issue this statement to deny the alleged offences as completely baseless and unfounded. We categorically reject all these allegations as false and malicious, the latest in the regime’s campaign of terror, denial, deception, and attempts at tarnishing the image of those who dare speak the truth about the situation of Rwanda and the authoritarian character of the regime. Equally, the outcome of the case that President Kagame has instituted against us is a foregone conclusion. Rwanda does not have an independent judiciary. We fully expect the outcome of the trial of the case in absentia to be a conviction, in spite of the fact that the case against us has no legal basis.

The case against us is principally a reaction to the wide circulation of the “Rwanda Briefing” document, the very positive reception that the document received among Rwandans and foreigners alike and press interviews that we have given in relation to the situation in Rwanda since the document’s publication. We have not committed any crime against the Rwanda state. We are not involved in any activities that contravene Rwandan law. We have neither advocated the violent overthrow of the government nor incited inter-ethnic hatred as alleged by the government. We have no connection whatsoever with any of the groups that are waging war against the government of Rwanda from bases in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as government propaganda has intimated in the recent past. All we have done is express our views, through our writings and interviews with the media, on the absence of democratic governance in Rwanda.



¹ The authors of “Rwanda Briefing” are: (1) Lt Gen Kayumba Nyamwasa, former Army Chief and Ambassador to India; and (2) Col Patrick Karegeya, former Head of External Intelligence; (3) Dr. Théogène Rudasingwa, former Secretary General of the RPF, Ambassador to Washington and Chief of Staff to the President and (4) Dr. Gerard Gahima, former Prosecutor General of Rwanda.

In the “Rwandan Briefing” document, we joined the ranks of many other Rwandan citizens (and foreigners) who have spoken out about the serious and deteriorating crisis that is confronting Rwanda. The crisis is characterized by President Kagame’s monopoly of power; violation of the fundamental human rights of citizens, including virtual denial of the right of political participation, severe limitations of the right of freedom of expression, draconian restrictions of the freedom of the media, and the rights of civil society and opposition parties to operate freely in the country; the manipulation of state institutions, especially like the judiciary and security to perpetuate dictatorship; assassination attempts, extra-judicial killings, and disappearances of government opponents and critics; and purges of the civilian echelons of the ruling party and the military establishment. We also gave an account, based on our personal knowledge and recollections, of President Kagame’s continuing misappropriation of state and party resources for his personal use, and for the use of the resources so illegally acquired to finance criminal covert operations in Rwanda and abroad against his real or perceived opponents.

Instead of replying to the substance of the issues that we raised in the “Rwanda Briefing” document and in press interviews before and since the publication of the document, President Kagame responded to our call for profound reform by intensifying persecution against us and other pro-democracy voices. Since the publication of the ‘Rwanda Briefing’ document, the government has intensified propaganda against us. Our relatives in Rwanda have been evicted from our homes and others like John Rutayisire were killed. Our homes and all their contents have been taken by the state. A vitriolic media campaign continues to churn out endless propaganda directed at us. Large delegations have been dispatched to capitals across Western Europe to carry on this relentless propaganda founded on obvious lies and deceit. The fallacious criminal charges that President Kagame is now leveling against us are the latest in a series of assaults to freedom of speech and the exercise of civil and political rights which are the hallmark of President Kagame’s authoritarian rule.

President Kagame’s reaction to our calls for political reform is neither unusual nor unexpected. The crimes which we stand accused in the instant case are template charges that President Kagame always invokes against all political opponents. Similar charges have been instituted against various members and leaders of opposition groups, including leaders Deo Mushayidi, Bernard Ntaganda, Victoire Ingabire, and Paul Rusesabagina. The charges are not only preposterous, but also confirm the Rwanda regime’s intransigence and unwillingness to address the root causes of Rwanda’s conflict that we have discussed in the ‘Rwanda Briefing’ document. After his policies and threats have compelled us to flee the country, President Kagame continues to relentlessly pursue us in exile to make sure we do not continue to inform the public about the authoritarian character of his rule, the corruption for which he is responsible, and the divisive policies of his government that are driving the country towards almost inevitable conflict and ruin. The summons that were issued against us this week are intended to intimidate us and to silence all people who like us are openly opposed to dictatorship in Rwanda. President Kagame does not want us to offer alternatives to his government.

Some in Rwanda and the international community initially hoped that President Kagame would ease the repressive nature of his government after the fraudulent elections of August 2010. On the contrary, the situation in Rwanda continues to become ever more precarious. Like its ruler, Rwanda remains a nation on edge, low on trust, and engulfed in a state of fear and terror. Since the elections, more Rwandans have died as result of extra-judicial killings. Others, including Victoire Ingabire, Bernard Ntaganda, Gen. Muhire, and Lt Col. Rugigana Ngabo, have been incarcerated on trumped up charges. Lt Col. Rugigana has been held incommunicado for months in unknown places, without access to medical care, legal representation or family members. Gen. Karenzi Karake has been under house arrest for months without charge. These political prisoners join other long standing political prisoners such as Charles Ntakirutinka and Stanislas Biseruka

In spite of the relentless persecution to which we have been and continue to be subjected, we remain committed to continuing our advocacy for peaceful political change in Rwanda. We assure the people of Rwanda as well as friends of Rwanda that we are not involved in any activities that promote or incite violent conflict. On the contrary, our advocacy for political reform in Rwanda aims to promote the peaceful resolution of the crisis now engulfing our motherland. Like many other Rwandans, we have called for peaceful change to avert the risk of another civil war. We are not amassing a military response to Kagame, as dialogue, not conflict, is the first step towards breaking the cycle of Rwanda's history of political violence. We have spoken out against state-inspired terror, President Kagame's divisive politics that marginalize and exclude most Rwandans from political participation, and against the lies and slander that the regime daily directs against its opponents precisely because we believe that the policies that President Kagame's government is pursuing are setting the country on a path towards inevitable conflict and bloodshed. We reiterate our unwavering belief in the necessity for political change in Rwanda as a pre-requisite for sustainable peace. We will continue to resist Kagame's autocratic rule by peaceful means, and we ask all Rwandans to do the same.

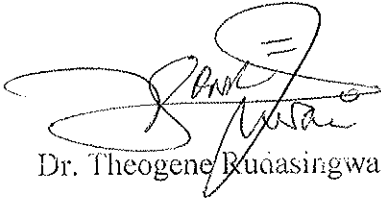
We also firmly stand by the contents of "Rwanda Briefing" relating to corrupt practices on the part of President Kagame. We are all fortunate to have received political asylum in democratic countries in which the courts are free. We challenge President Kagame to seek remedies in the courts of the countries in which we now reside if he wants to challenge our account of the facts as we have reported them.

Rwanda is once again at dangerous cross roads. President Kagame's repressive rule fuels ethnic polarization, social upheaval and almost inevitable conflict. Failing profound political changes, Rwanda is set on a course that could lead to devastating consequences, inside Rwanda itself and the Great Lakes region generally. Peaceful and democratic change in Rwanda requires sustained investment in protecting fundamental freedoms, promoting the values of respect for human rights and the rule of law, establishing democratic and accountable institutions, and working for healing of individuals and communities as the cornerstone for a shared future of durable peace, security, and prosperity in a diverse but united nation.



We therefore call upon all Rwandans to choose the path of democratic change, a peaceful alternative to repression, conflict and bloodshed. We urge all Rwandans to unite and peacefully struggle to regain their fundamental freedoms, to demand and obtain the right to associate and engage in fruitful dialogue so as to build a shared future, and to seek the establishment of a new broad-based government that respects the rule of law to lead the country through a necessary transition to democracy. We cannot postpone this just and peaceful struggle to another time and another generation.

We also call upon the international community, especially Rwanda's major development partners as well as her neighbors and the African Union, to condemn in the strongest terms possible, the continuing closure of space for political participation, the draconian restrictions on freedom of expression and the press, the persecution of members and leaders of opposition groups, including ourselves, and the abuse of the country's law enforcement and judicial system to sustain dictatorial rule in Rwanda. We urge governments of foreign states to reject President Kagame's attempt to manipulate the international law enforcement system to harass innocent Rwandans, including those who have fled the regime's campaign of terror. We also strongly urge the whole international community to unambiguously support the aspirations of the people of Rwanda for peaceful political change.



Dr. Theogene Rudasingwa

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Washington DC, USA.

Contact:

Dr. Theogene Rudasingwa
Telephone: +1 510-717-8479
E-mail: ngombwa@gmail.com