



Inkingi Forces Démocratiques Unifiées United Democratic Forces

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Kigali - Rwanda

"Pour un Etat de Droit, la Democratie et l'Egalité de chances"; "For the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity"

Kigali 17 October 2012

RWANDA: CRUSHED OPPOSITION NOW PUSHED TO THE EDGE.

Call for international solidarity.

Opposition leaders Victoire Ingabire, Chair of FDU-INKINGI; Deogratias Mushayidi, Chair of PDP IMANZI; Bernard Ntaganda, Chair of PS IMBERAKURI; and journalists are languishing in Rwandan prisons. The intimidation of many other members of the opposition is still going on. On 15 September 2012, 8 members of FDU-Inkingi in Rutsiro District have been arrested. They are now detained in MUHANGA central prison after KARONGI intermediate court blessed their preventive detention because of attending a talk with the FDU-Inkingi interim Secretary General, Sylvain Sibomana. His arrest is imminent, as a manhunt is underway after the National Public Prosecution Authority issued a red notice.

With this deteriorating political situation and continuing violations of human rights, Rwanda has all the ingredients of a global crisis.

We call upon all friends of Rwanda to make their voices heard in favor of the opening of political space. We are not going to wait until we all go to prison. We will march until freedom is won.

Is the political situation going to change in Rwanda? Yes it is, despite unrelenting efforts from the government to silence and muzzle the opposition. We are afraid that the situation is slowly reaching a non return point and that the population will soon go to the streets.

Now, and only now, the democratic opposition needs the international solidarity. We call upon leaders of this world to use their leverage on President Paul Kagame, to make him understand that democratic opposition is not enemy of the country and that opponents have right to freedom too, and that their place is not in maximum prison. The main partners of Rwanda continue to keep silent as opposition members are imprisoned, tortured and persecuted.

Members of European Parliament Willy Meyer, Rosa Estaràs, Santiago Fisas, María Muñoz, Ana Miranda and 37 other MEPs have nominated three renown Rwanda political prisoners, Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, Deogratias Mushayidi, and Bernard Ntaganda for the international Sakharov Prize edition 2012.

Bernard Ntaganda the president of PS Imberakuri is serving a 4 year sentence while Deogratias Mushayidi, Chair of PDP Imanzi, was handed a life sentence.

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Madame Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, FDU-Inkingi chair, has been arrested two years ago on politically motivated charges. She has been boycotting the last parts of her trial after serious intimidation of her lone witness. The High court is due to issue a life sentence ruling on 19 October 2012.

On 27 September 2012, the Karongi Intermediate court judge Felicien Twagiramungu charged 8 other FDU-Inkingi members from Rutshiro district of illegal political activities and threats to public security. He led a kangaroo process that refused bail and ordered a 30 day-provisional detention in a central prison for Mutuyimana Anselme, Uwiringiyimana venuste, Ufitamahoro Norbert, Dukundane Moise, Twizerimana Valens, Nahimana Marcel, Byukusenge Emmanuel and Gasengayire Leonille. The appeal was rejected on 15 October 2012.

Last year it has been established in Kigali high court that Rwandan prosecution used fabricated evidence and forged emails in the case against Madame Victoire Ingabire.

On 8 October 2012, Amnesty International published a new report untitled "Rwanda must investigate unlawful detention and torture by military intelligence"

Regarding the case of Madame Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, this report states :

« The trial of opposition politician, Victoire Ingabire, provides another example of where judges have failed to probe the detention conditions of defendants.

Victoire Ingabire, the president of the United Democratic Forces (FDU-Inkingi), was brought to trial in 2011 on a range of terrorism and speech-related charges. The terrorism-related charges are based, in part, on the testimony of four men tried alongside her, all of whom pleaded guilty. All the men – Major Vital Uwumuremyi, Lieutenant Colonel Tharcisse Nditurende, Lieutenant Colonel Noel Habyaremye and Captain Jean Marie Vianney Karuta – confessed to past involvement with the FDLR. The prosecution allege that Victoire Ingabire worked with the co-accused men to try to form an armed group, the Coalition of Defence Forces (CDF). The co-accused said that she held meetings with them in the DRC and the Republic of Congo and that she transferred money to them by Western Union through third parties.

The court did not properly test oral evidence given by the co-accused. During the limited questions that the court permitted the defence, it materialized that Lieutenant Colonel Tharcisse Nditurende and Lieutenant Colonel Noel Habyaremye had been unlawfully detained at Camp Kami for seven months before incriminating Victoire Ingabire. The defence managed to elicit that they were interrogated more than three times by individuals whom they presumed to be intelligence agents. The co-accused said that these interviews took place without the presence of a lawyer and Lieutenant Colonel Tharcisse Nditurende told the court, "I didn't know it even existed to be assisted by defence counsel."

The court prevented Victoire Ingabire's defence team from asking questions about detention conditions in Camp Kami, as the co-accused themselves had not lodged a complaint. They were unable to clarify if the co-accusers' evidence may have been coerced or induced. The court made no efforts to obtain notes taken during the interrogations of the co-accused at Camp Kami, even though they might have contained exculpatory information potentially instrumental to Victoire Ingabire's defence, such as indications that the statements were not made voluntarily. At this writing, the High Court is yet to pronounce its verdict ».

The report details credible accounts of individuals being subjected to serious beatings, electric shocks and sensory deprivation to force confessions during interrogations.

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"The Rwandan military's human rights record abroad is increasingly scrutinized, but their unlawful detention and torture of civilians in Rwanda is shrouded in secrecy," said Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International's Acting Deputy Africa Director

The case against FDU-Inkingi supporters in Rutsiro District has confirmed that the government will never allow political opposition to convene. The Karongi Intermediate Court Ruling Nr. 126/12/TGI/GI of 27 September 2012 refused bail to the defendants because they have spoken to the party interim secretary general, Sylvain Sibomana. **The Karongi Intermediate Court added that Sylvain SIBOMANA is on a wanted list for illegal political activities and attempts to disrupt public safety.**

How any opposition party would prepare a by-law constitutional congress if people are just arrested because of simple meeting?

We encourage all bilateral partners of Rwanda to utilise their full leverage in their relationship to influence Rwanda towards good domestic, regional and international behavior. We believe that security, development and diplomatic progress can be reinforced through a more candid and demanding stand on key issues of justice, accountability, human rights, regional stability, opening of political space and freedom of expression. There will be no lasting solution in Rwanda nor in the region if crucial issues continue to be ignored: the lack of internal political space in Rwanda; the plight of political prisoners i.e. Madame Victoire Ingabire (Chairperson FDU-INKINGI), Bernard Ntaganda (Founding President PS Imberakuri), Deogratias Mushayidi (PDP Imanzi), Dr. Theoneste Niyitegeka (Presidential candidate in 2003); disappearances and assassinations of political figures and critical journalists; the impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity; political refugees, etc...

The time to act is now.

FDU-Inkingi
Interim Secretary General
Sylvain Sibomana.