

RWANDA

OPEN LETTER TO U.S. PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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President George W. Bush

The White House

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the PDR-Ihumure, the Intwari Partnership, and the UDF-Inkingi, three political organizations of Rwandan refugees in Africa, the U.S., Canada and Europe that have forged a coalition to fight President Paul Kagame's RPF dictatorship in Kigali, we welcome the news of your upcoming visit to Africa, especially to Rwanda, our beloved mother land. Rwanda is dubbed the country of a thousand hills, but it is also the country of a thousand problems. That is why we feel compelled to bring to your attention a few critical elements of information regarding our country, especially since your visit will focus on "countries where progress is being made in economic development, the fight against HIV/AIDS and other treatable diseases", and we strongly believe Rwanda is not of them.

1. On February 6, 2008, Spanish judge Fernando Andreu Mirelles issued international arrest warrants against 40 Rwandan Patriotic Front officers for the crime of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of terrorism these officers committed in Rwanda and neighboring Congo since 1994, resulting in the death of over 5 million civilian victims. Only World War II had a higher number of victims in the history of humanity. Judge Mirelles's action was motivated by the need to bring to justice those responsible for the brutal killing of Spanish priests, volunteers and technical experts in Rwanda in the years after the 1994 genocide had ended. Mr. President, we believe your visit may be perceived as giving support to an RPF government that now stands accused of these terrible crimes, and that's troubling. But more troubling is the perception of contradiction in visiting this terrorist RPF government when the official policy throughout your presidency has been to denounce, isolate, and combat terrorism and terrorist groups everywhere in the world. It seems the right course of action should be to seek the immediate resignation of the Rwandan President so he can face justice and answer for his crimes against the Rwandan people and the international community.

2. In November 2006, French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière issued arrest warrants against leaders of the RPF army and government for their role in downing the presidential aircraft over Kigali airport on April 6, 1994, killing the Rwandan and Burundian presidents as well as three French crew members among others, triggering the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Now, a Spanish judge has done the same because of Spanish nationals the RPF army is alleged to have killed. When is an American judge going to investigate the RPF army for their suspected role in the killing of American citizens Rob Haubner and his wife Susan Miller in the Bwindi National Park in 1999 in Uganda? We now know that previous suspects in this Bwindi massacre, who were framed and tortured by the RPF, have since been cleared of any involvement by a U.S. court. It seems only logical, therefore, to look in the other direction and find out whether or not the RPF may have planned and executed this butchery.

3. When you arrive in Kigali, the RPF will waste no time taking you to one of the many "Genocide Memorials" throughout the country. Did you know, Mr. President, that thousands of bones and skulls in these memorials do not belong to Tutsi victims as the RPF has been telling the whole world all these years but to Hutu victims killed by the same RPF during the genocide? Did you know that in our Rwandan culture the dead are respected and given a proper burial and resting place, and it is a sacrilege to expose the remains of a dead person, that the RPF would not expose these bones if they belonged to their relatives, that the RPF has rejected calls to bury these remains and instead uses them to curry the sympathy of foreign visitors like you so they can get more aid and win legitimacy as a government? Did you know that aid to genocide survivors is diverted to support only a few well-connected Tutsi families while the rest are left out without assistance? Did you know that the term "genocide survivor" in Rwanda applies only to Tutsis while we all know that there are many Hutu survivors of the genocide? Did you know, Mr. President, that during the National Period of Mourning in April of each year, not all people have the right to grieve and mourn for the loss of their loved ones during the genocide?

4. Rwanda's economy is often touted as one of the fastest growing in Africa. But did you know, Mr. President, that over 90% of that economy is in the hands of a few families in the ruling circles while the rest of the population lives in misery? Did you know that while the average Rwandan lives on less than \$1.00 per day, President Paul Kagame makes over \$20,000 per month (about \$9,000 in work allowance and about \$12,000 in residence and guest entertainment allowance, both of which are not taxed)? Evidently, Rwanda's economy is not capable of supporting these kinds of lofty salaries, which therefore are diverted from foreign assistance money intended to help the population at large. How can Rwanda's economy fare well under such circumstances, and when a whopping 13% of Rwanda's total annual budget, 60% of which comes from foreign assistance, is allocated to weapons procurement and other military expenses? (Rwanda is number one in the world for military spending in CIA world fact book of 2006). Recent reports have also pointed to existing U.S. assistance programs for Rwanda where millions of dollars are being wasted on Rwandan military training while the masses are hurting. This may help explain why the Rwandan Patriotic Army has become the main sponsor of military aggression, proxy wars and instability across the entire Great Lakes region of Africa, especially in the

Democratic Republic of Congo, and that is very troubling. Until there is peace in Rwanda, preferably brokered through a fully inclusive Rwandan Dialogue and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that follows the model of post-Apartheid South Africa, there will be no peace in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. President, these are just a few cases on a long list of the many pressing challenges besieging Rwandan society today. We believe the following rundown of our country's timeline of tragedy will give you a better grasp of the complexity of the issues at hand and why Rwanda is headed towards another catastrophic implosion.

1. The predominantly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebel movement attack on Rwanda from Uganda on October 10, 1990 triggered a defense response by the predominantly Hutu government army known as the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) and set in motion a brutal cycle of ethnic violence among Rwandans, putting an end to the delicate peace and harmony among Rwandans and reviving the old ethnic animosity among Hutus and Tutsis.

2. The ensuing guerilla war led to the destruction of property, including private and public buildings and infrastructures, as well as the ethnic killing of hundreds of thousands of Hutus and Tutsis and the internal displacement of millions of others, resulting in severe suffering, hunger, disease and malnutrition.

3. The Arusha Peace Accords signed between the RPF rebel group of General Paul Kagame and the Rwandan government of President Juvenal Habyarimana on August 4, 1993 led Rwandans to believe that peace was finally at hand. But that hope quickly vanished on April 6, 1994, when the airplane carrying Presidents Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprian Ntaryamira of Burundi and their respective delegations from a summit meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was shot down by the RPF, touching off 3 months of intense inter ethnic killings between Hutus and Tutsis (now widely referred to as the Rwandan genocide) and resulted in the defeat and flight into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) of the previous government and army, and the victory and rise to power of the RPF rebel organization.

4. The shooting down of the presidential aircraft by the RPF was a deliberate act of cheating, an act of unmistakable power grabbing, and a callous mockery of the principle of power-sharing consecrated by the the Arusha Peace Accords. The RPF subsequent victory effectively buried that Arusha Peace Agreement by chasing away from the Rwandan political scene the other party to this Peace Agreement.

5. The political, economic, social, and demographic imbalances that this Arusha Peace Agreement was designed to remedy have not only remained but worsened as the RPF has installed a monopoly of all sectors of life and is running Rwanda as a private property.

6. The shooting down by missile of former President Habyarimana's aircraft at Kigali airport on April 6, 1994 during a very tense political situation in our national history, which is the single most determining element that opened Rwanda's Pandora's box of tragedy, remains unprosecuted and unpunished to this day, denying truth to come out and justice to take hold, thus making Rwanda's crisis realistically unsolvable.

7. Thanks to available evidence and hindsight, with expert testimony from key witnesses such as Lt. Abdul Ruzibiza, a former RPF army officer, Filip Reyntjens, an Antwerp University professor and specialist of the Great Lakes region of Africa, Michael Hourigan, a UN investigator for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Colonel Luc Marchal, a former U.N. Rwanda mission commander in Kigali during the genocide, and many others clearly show that the Rwandan genocide planning and execution was the act not of the previous government but of the RPF rebel group, which planted and paid its members within the former government structures to create, arm and lead the Interahamwe militia into committing the genocide; two prominent names of such RPF members are Anastase Gasana, who created the Interahamwe militia, and Robert Kajuga, the leader of the Interahamwe militia and a close relative of Jeannette Kagame, the wife of the current Rwandan president.

8. Further available evidence and hindsight show that at the height of the genocidal killings in 1994, all attempts and offers to negotiate a ceasefire and an end to hostilities failed because the RPF rebel group rejected those offers; further evidence and hindsight show that the RPF rebel group allowed genocide to run its course by not intervening to save populations at risk and by threatening to engage and shoot at international peace maintenance troops if any dared to come between them and the Rwandan government armed forces known as the FAR; the RPF was confident to win the war because it was fighting against a decapitated government and army in disarray; interestingly, now the RPF does not miss a chance to blackmail the international community for "having failed to send troops to stop the genocide."

9. The rise to power by the RPF has ushered in an era of terror and a police state, massive imprisonments of well over 100,000 genocide suspects, innumerable cases of gross human rights abuse inside the country including widespread killings and disappearances of innocent civilians, the infringement of the freedom of speech, the banning and exclusion of free political activity and discourse, and the exodus of close to 2 million Rwandan refugees outside of Rwanda's borders.

10. The current Rwandan constitution, tailored to suit the interests of the RPF ruling class rather than those of the nation, formally recognizes that crimes of genocide took place in Rwanda from October 1, 1990 to December 31, 1994 but the RPF government has resorted to selective prosecution of those crimes during that period of time, turning a blind eye to evidence of suspects within its own ranks; further crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed in Zaire by the RPF during the 1996 to 1998 invasion of Zaire.

11. The RPF government has purposely put in place a demonization policy against its opponents by branding them "genocidaires", "revisionists", "genocide negationists" or "peddlers of the ideology of genocide", and has gone as far as stating that children of genocidaires are also genocidaires.

12. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) as mandated by the U.N. to prosecute all crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Rwanda from January 1, 1994 to December 31, 1994 has arrested, judged and sentenced ONLY suspected members of one of the parties to the Rwandan genocide, and the Rwandan government mandated GACACA courts have prosecuted ONLY members of the Hutu ethnic group.

13. The official policy is that ethnic groups no longer exist in Rwanda, yet the Rwandan government, the legislature, the judiciary, the territorial administration, the army, the economy, the educational institutions at the secondary and higher levels of learning, all of them are dominated by a handful group within the Tutsi ethnic group, which represents 15% of the entire Rwandan population, thus ensuring future social and ethnic imbalances and confrontations, and mortgaging the peace and harmony of future Rwandan generations.

14. The chances are great rather than slim, that legislative elections scheduled for later this year as well Presidential elections in two years will result in the kind of popular uprising and ethnic violence we have witnessed in Kenya this year. Already, the RPF is fully engaged in pre-election terror and intimidation, especially with the arrest and incarceration of Dr. Théoneste Niyitegeka of Gitarama on February 5, 2008, simply because he is perceived as a political opponent.

15. All these preceding elements are unmistakable evidence of a deeply dysfunctional Rwandan society whose only ultimate outcome is an impending repeat of the 1994 genocidal national collapse if no preventive action is taken.

Mr. President, the calmness and quiet of daily life in Rwanda belies a deep-set malaise and discontent resulting from all these problems, and slowly but surely Rwanda is dangerously sliding towards another tragedy if nothing is done to reverse the trends as quickly as possible.

As representatives of our political organizations, we are fully aware that Rwanda's major partners, especially the United States of America, have special economic, geopolitical, and security interests in our Great Lakes region of Africa, and we solemnly pledge to work with you to support and protect those interests. But at the same, we know that Rwanda is a special country in the heart of Africa, strategically located and possessing all the dynamic ingredients of becoming a brilliant model of democracy and the Singapore of Africa, not because of what the RPF government or previous governments have done, but because of the industriousness of the Rwandan people. All we ask is that Rwanda be given a realistic chance to prove it, instead of being abandoned to the whims of an implacable dictator now facing prosecution from the international community for his crimes.

We are fully cognizant of your very charged agenda on your trip, but we hope you will find some time to give full consideration to these critically important issues for the future of Rwanda. We wish you and your team a very fruitful visit to Africa.

Very respectfully,

Jérôme Nayigiziki (Signed)
General Secretary - PDR-Ihumure

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