



Igicumbi – Voix des Rescapés du génocide contre les Tutsi, AISBL
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Open letter addressed to President Paul Kagame by the IGICUMBI Association – Voice of the Survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi

Mr. President of the Republic of Rwanda,

As we are preparing to commemorate for the 30th time the Genocide against the Tutsi, IGICUMBI Association - Voice of the Survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi – writes to you requesting you to put an end to and prevent the killings and other abuses being committed against Genocide Survivors of this tragedy. These are often committed shortly before or during the commemorative period, and they have marred the last 30 years without discontinuation to the point of becoming culture, an accepted custom.

Most of these killings and abuses are committed in a way that leaves no doubt about the government security services involvement. For many others, the government's failure to prevent or prosecute and its determination to persecute the victims' family members as well as anyone daring to express an opinion about them, leads us to believe the said government bears responsibility in the said killings.

Mr President, we are equally requesting you to stop using the genocide commemoration as an RPF (Rwandese Patriotic Front) political propaganda tool or as a persecution weapon against

genocide survivors. It should be noted that when you're not personally involved in these persecutions, they are carried out by your government security services under the cover of the law against genocide-related crimes.

We are also calling for an end to all activities used to prevent Genocide Survivors from honouring our loved ones killed during the Genocide against the Tutsi, our history and that of the Genocide itself, in appropriate dignity and freedom. The commemoration should be for us an occasion of contemplation and tribute to our departed family and friends without hindrance or obstruction, without being dictated the line and content of our testimonies.

We will set out all these grievances in the following points:

1) For thirty years now, the period of commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi as well as the one that shortly precedes it have been marred by assassinations that particularly target survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi, especially the most prominent among us in various sectors of life: economy, education, art, etc. As a result, every time we are commemorating or preparing to commemorate our loved ones, we are always plunged into further mourning of more fellow survivors killed by the current Government security services. The list of those who have been murdered or disappeared in this way is too long to catalogue in this letter but as a reminder, we provide you with a small sample of those who have been murdered in the last ten years alone:

- Gérard Niyomugabo Nyamihirwe (4 April 2014, missing)
- John Ndagijimana (4 June 2014, murder, body found with wounds on the head)
- Richard Mazimpaka (3 December 2014, murder disguised as suicide)

- Assinapol Rwigara (4 February 2015, murder disguised as traffic accident, then subsequently family members subjected to multiple persecutions, damages and property spoliation, daughter later died in unusual circumstances)
- Major Dieudonné Kayitare (14 February 2015, kidnapping and murder)

- Dr. Emmanuel Gasakure (25 February 2015, murder, shot dead by the security services while in police custody)
- Father Dominique Karekezi (10 August 2015, murder)

- Dr. Naason Munyandamutsa (11 March 2016, sudden death)
- Father Augustin Musada (31 March 2016, sudden death)
- Gaspard Gasasira (7 October 2016, sudden death)
- Jean de Dieu Mucyo (3 October 2016, murder disguised as a accidental fall on stairs)
- Vénuste Rwabukamba (10 October 2016, murder disguised as suicide, shot dead with arms tied behind the back)
- Bertin Makuza (3 November 2016, sudden death)
- Muyenzi Fidèle Thadée (26 October 2016, missing)

- Christine Ilibagiza (13 April 2017, murder by strangulation)

- Chief Commissioner of Police Hubert Gashagaza (18 September 2018, murder by strangulation)
- Corporal Mwiseneza Jean-Paul (10 June 2019, murder, beheaded)
- Kizito Mihigo (17 February 2020, murder disguised as suicide while in police custody)
- Dr. Pierre Claver Kayumba (23 November 2020, sudden death)

- Innocent Bahati (7 February 2021, kidnapped by members of security services)
- Georges Rutayisire (10 February 2021, murder by strangulation)
- Jean de Dieu Twiringiyimana (13 April 2021, murder, shot dead in broad daylight by army members)
- Innocente Mukamunana (sister of John of God Twiringiyimana, 6 May 2021, missing)
- Cassien Ntamuhanga (23 May 2021, kidnapping)

- Madeleine Mujawayezu (30 May 2023, murder by strangulation)
- Prudence Rutayisire Cyusa (11 April 2023, murder disguised as traffic accident)

- Anne Uwamahoro Rwigara (late Assinapol Rwigara's daughter, 28 December 2023, sudden death)

Everyone on this list, as well as many others who are not on it, has been brutally murdered either by shooting, strangulation, stabbing, poisoning, etc., has been abducted and/or is missing. Whenever we have advocated for independent investigations, we and/or our relatives as well as the victims' families were subjected to various types of intimidation and persecution, some had their property confiscated or simply demolished. In some cases, the government's security services blamed the killings on innocent individuals then assassinated them, allegedly for the crimes of attempt to escape or resisting arrest, rather than conducting proper investigations and prosecution. On other occasions, security services claimed the alleged killers were in too much shock to be investigated.

2) Genocide survivors' murders are always accompanied by multiple other abuses of various kinds:

a) During the commemorative or pre-commemorative period, Survivors are subjected to various forms of brutality, their livestock killed or injured with machetes, their crops vandalised, stones thrown at their homes and damaging their roofs and windows and many other ways of terror. In the last 30 years, no government measures have been taken to put an end to this violence and as a result, it has been repeated every year, leading us to believe that the government is responsible or at the very least is shielding perpetrators.

(b) Rather than providing justice to Survivors victims of crimes, the judiciary chooses to persecute them on trumped-up charges with the aim to silence them, seizing their property in the process, subjecting them to torture and sometimes killing them in their place of detention. Mrs. Eugénie Nyirankundabanyanga, a Survivor herself, spent ten months in prison following false accusations of having been involved in the Genocide that claimed most members of her family. These said charges were fabricated based on an inexistant court judgement, fabricated and issued by the

former CNLG (National Commission for the Fight against Genocide). Mrs Nyirankundabanyanga sham trial clearly had to depriving her of her much sought after land.

3) It has become standard practice that expressing oneself freely about the RPF regime leads to accusations of crimes related to the genocide, including denial, justification, trivialisation of the genocide or its ideology. While it is true that these crimes exist and must be denounced and punished wherever they occur, in times of commemoration they are abusively used as a tool of violence or division against Genocide Survivors. IGICUMBI denounces and will continue to denounce Genocide exploitation used to commit injustices against innocent people.

It should be noted that at least three of our fellow Genocide Survivors namely Mr. Déogratias Mushayidi, Mrs. Yvonne Idamange Iryamugwiza and Mr. Aimable Karasira Uzaramba are languishing in jail in exceptionally inhumane conditions that could end their life at any time, following accusations of the aforementioned Genocide related crimes. The real reason behind their troubles is they dared voicing their grievances in relation to RPF regime's crimes or those of its former army committed against their relatives or other people, they also get punished for denouncing the deplorable conditions Genocide Survivors live in. While the Government fails to fulfil its constitutional duty of care for the neediest amongst Genocide Survivors, it has equally categorically rejected all calls for any form of compensation for the government's unlawful acts during the Genocide. On the contrary, anyone who raises that issue is swiftly and brutally silenced.

4) Each year, Genocide Survivors are presented with a pre-tailored commemoration program that sets out a schedule, theme, plan and agenda to be followed to the detail. They do not enjoy the freedom to provide story-based testimonies of what they have been through themselves and often, their testimonies are reviewed to include praises to the ruling party and its president or simply they are presented with pre-drafted testimonies to read. The result is that what is supposed to be genocide commemoration becomes a propaganda instrument for the ruling party, its army and its president.

5) During commemoration ceremonies, the government gives centre stage to notorious genocide perpetrators, supposedly to give them an opportunity to shed light on the genocide history for they are the ones holding all the information related to it. Other perpetrators who have been tried and convicted by courts of law are exempted from serving their sentence due to their unwavering allegiance to the regime. They are treated with honours during commemoration ceremonies, comfortably placed in VIP seats next to high-ranking officials of the regime. This cynical exercise traumatises and demoralises Genocide Survivors, defiles the deceased and degrades the act of commemoration itself.

6) The RPF government strives to create divisions amongst Genocide Survivors to subjugate them and to transform them into tools of its political propaganda. During the commemoration period, rather than standing together to pay respect to their loved ones in the dignity they deserve, Survivors tear each other apart over disagreements between those in favour and those against the government's command to integrate perpetrators.

The list of Government's assaults enumerated above is just indicative of some of the crucial issues bearing serious and diverse consequences on our lives as Genocide Survivors. They prevent us from patching our genocide wounds, are a massive hindrance to our social-economic development, they frustrate our natural rights to duly pay respect to our departed loved ones, cause profound internal divisions and set us on a collusion against anyone subjugated by the RPF government under the deceptive guise of protection.

On 17 February 2024, during its most recent commemoration of the lives of fellow survivors murdered by the RPF government in the last 30 years, IGICUMBI Association raised this issue and would like to emphasise it here: all tragedies that the RPF government inflict on us Genocide Survivors exacerbate consequences of the genocide against us. Wiping out the intellectual, entrepreneurship, artistic, innovation and leadership elite amongst us, the very ones who are best equipped to help us getting out of the Genocide aftermath equates to backing the initial

Genocide project. As a matter of fact, in 1994, the genocide perpetrators exterminated us starting with the most distinguished amongst us, so that even the remaining few would live and/or die miserably for lack of support. Moreover, violence is pushed to such extent we can state loud and clear that, apart from times of war or major crises, never in the past, under any of the regimes past, have we ever been subjected to such brutality.

It is in the name of all the above that we demand the RPF government puts a halt to all the violence and other abuses against us Genocide Survivors, that our fundamental rights as human beings, as citizens, as genocide survivors be duly respected. We request once again, as we have done on several occasions, that our sister Yvonne Idamange Iryamugwiza and brothers Deogratias Mushayidi and Aimable Karasira Uzaramba, incarcerated on trumped-up charges, including crimes related to the same Genocide they themselves survived and that claimed lives of their loved ones, be released immediately and unconditionally.

Signed by: *Philippe Basabose*
Dr. Philippe Basabose, President

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CC :

- 1) H.E. António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations Organization
- 2) H.E. Alessandro Chiochetti, Secretary General of the European Union
- 3) H.E. Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
- 4) H.E. Joseph Biden, President of the United States of America
- 5) The Rt. Hon Mike Johnson, Speaker of the United States' House of Representatives
- 6) The Rt. Hon Penny Mordaunt, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the UK House of Commons
- 7) The Rt. Hon Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
- 8) H.E. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic of France
- 9) The Rt. Hon Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of the Belgian Federal Government
- 10) The Rt. Hon Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor
- 11) Hon. Greg Fergus, Speaker of the House of Commons, Canada
- 12) H.E. Yaël Braun-Pivet, President of the National French Assembly
- 13) Hon. Martin Bosma, Chairman of the Dutch House of Representatives
- 14) H.E. Éric Nussbaumer, President of the National Council of Switzerland
- 15) H.E. Éliane Tillieux, President of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives

- 16) The Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland KC, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
- 17) Hon. Anthony J. Blinken, United States Secretary of State
- 18) Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada
- 19) Hon. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, USA Ambassador to the United Nations
- 20) H.E. Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, Chairperson of the African Union
- 21) H.E. Volker Türk, High Commissioner of the United Nations on Human Rights
- 22) H.E. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner of the United Nations for Refugees
- 23) Ms. Tirana Hassan, Interim Executive Director of Human Rights Watch
- 24) Dr. Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International
- 25) Hon Lou Correa, Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
- 26) Hon. Peter M. Mathuki, East African Community Secretary General
- 27) Hon. Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Commission on People's and Human Rights
- 28) Mrs. Alice Mogwe, President of the International Federation of Human Rights