



IGICUMBI – Voix des Rescapés du génocide contre les Tutsi, AISBL

Chaussée de Roodebeek 206

1200 Woluwe-Saint-Lambert

Bruxelles, Belgique

E-mail address : igicumbi21@protonmail.com

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Statement no 0509052026 of IGICUMBI - Voix des Rescapés du Génocide contre les Tutsis:

The Death of Aimable Uzaramba Karasira and Call for an Independent International Investigation

IGICUMBI AISBL, an independent international association representing survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, issues this urgent statement following the death of Aimable Uzaramba Karasira, announced by the Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS) on the morning of 7 May 2026.

According to the RCS, Karasira, aged 48, who was a survivor of the Genocide against the Tutsi, a former lecturer at the University of Rwanda, and a prominent YouTube commentator died at Nyarugenge Hospital from a suspected medication overdose, only hours before his scheduled release from Nyarugenge Correctional Facility (Mageragere), where he had completed a five-year prison sentence.

IGICUMBI AISBL believes the circumstances surrounding his death raise serious concerns and warrant an independent international investigation. The organization notes that Karasira was arrested in May 2021 and, was convicted in September 2025 on charges including “divisionism,” accusations that organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Committee to Protect Journalists, and Amnesty International repeatedly characterized as politically motivated.

His offence was speaking publicly through his YouTube channel, “Ukuri Mbona” (“The Truth As I See It”), about his family’s experience during the Genocide against the Tutsi: relatives murdered by Interahamwe militias and others killed by soldiers of the RPF’s armed wing. He was a survivor of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi whose testimony did not fit the ruling party’s approved narrative, and for that he was imprisoned. Throughout his detention, he

reported suffering beatings, sleep deprivation, and denial of treatment for diabetes and depression.

Circumstances surrounding Karasira's death are deeply troubling and demand immediate, independent scrutiny. On Wednesday, 6 May 2026, Karasira reportedly signed his release papers in the afternoon. Since approximately 7:00 AM that morning, friends, relatives, and journalists had gathered outside the prison awaiting his release. Yet despite completing the formalities, he was never permitted to leave.

Throughout the day, prison authorities reportedly offered shifting explanations to those waiting outside, including claims that he still had too many belongings to collect. Hours passed while his loved ones remained outside the prison gates expecting his release.

Then, in the early hours of 7 May 2026, at approximately 1:45 AM, the spokesperson for the Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS) issued a written statement on X and repeated the account to TV1 Rwanda, claiming that at around 3:00 PM on 6 May, while Karasira was allegedly being "escorted out," he consumed a large quantity of his prescribed medication. According to the RCS, officials intervened but it was already "too late." He was subsequently transferred to Nyarugenge Hospital, where his death was later confirmed.

The timeline presented by authorities contains apparent inconsistencies and leaves critical questions unanswered, particularly given that Karasira never came out of prison despite supporters waiting outside throughout the day.

This official version is sharply disputed by journalists and witnesses who had gathered outside the prison awaiting his release. Several reported hearing Karasira screaming from inside the facility, as though he were being assaulted. Yet the RCS has disclosed neither the type of medication allegedly involved, nor the quantity consumed, nor even the precise time of death. No independent autopsy has been announced. No transparent investigation has been opened. And no credible explanation has been provided for how a detainee under constant state custody could obtain a lethal quantity of controlled medication on the very day he was supposed to walk free.

For many Rwandans, these unanswered questions are not occurring in a vacuum. They evoke a familiar and deeply troubling pattern: politically sensitive figures dying in custody or under opaque circumstances, followed by rushed official explanations and the absence of any genuinely independent inquiry. We have seen this before.

On 17 February 2020, Kizito Mihigo was found dead in his cell at Remera Police Station. Authorities claimed he had strangled himself with bedsheets. Yet only days earlier, Mihigo had told Human Rights Watch that state agents were threatening him and that he feared for his life. No credible independent investigation was ever conducted into the circumstances of his death.

On 18 January 2023, investigative journalist John Williams Ntwali, one of the few reporters who continued covering the case of Aimable Karasira, died in what authorities described as a motorcycle accident at approximately 2:50 AM in Kigali. The driver allegedly involved was convicted of manslaughter in a single closed hearing without observers. Before his death, Ntwali had publicly spoken about surviving what he described as "staged accidents" and repeated threats from security services. Eighty-six civil society organizations later called for an independent investigation into his death. None was granted.

The pattern is consistent: a critical voice, a death in state custody or under suspicious circumstances, an implausible and self-contradictory official explanation, no independent investigation, and total impunity. Karasira's death is not an isolated tragedy. It is the latest expression of a systematic campaign to silence survivors and critics who contest the RPF's monopoly on truth about the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

IGICUMBI AISBL was founded precisely because existing survivor associations in Rwanda have been co-opted or silenced. For over thirty years, survivors have faced continued assassinations without accountability, persecution for speaking out, misappropriation of funds meant for their welfare, and the instrumentalization of Genocide against the Tutsi memory for political purposes. Karasira embodied the courage to say out loud what many survivors feel but dare not speak. His suspicious death sends a warning to every survivor of the Genocide against the Tutsi and to every Rwandan who might consider sharing their Genocide against the Tutsi story in a way not endorsed by the RPF regime.

We call for an independent, international investigation into the death of Aimable Karasira. This should include an independent autopsy conducted by international forensic experts, a comprehensive toxicology analysis, a review of prison medical records, and witness interviews carried out free from any Rwandan government interference.

We further urge governments that maintain partnerships with Rwanda, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the European Union, to publicly request such an investigation and to make clear that continued impunity will carry consequences.

Finally, we call on the United Nations Human Rights Council, along with the relevant Special Rapporteurs, to take prompt and concrete action.

We call for the immediate preservation of all evidence related to Karasira's final hours, as well as the protection of all potential witnesses. We also renew our call for the release of all Genocide against the Tutsi survivors detained in Rwanda for exercising their right to free expression, including Deo Mushaidi, the longest-held political prisoner in Rwanda, and Iryamugwiza Yvonne Idamange, who has been held in appalling conditions and whose life we fear may be at risk.

Aimable Karasira survived the Genocide against the Tutsi, the assassination of his parents, and five years of imprisonment and torture. He did not survive the day of his release. We reject the claim that he took his own life on the very day he had been waiting for.

The international community cannot continue to treat Rwanda as a model of governance while critics die in custody under suspicious circumstances. We demand justice.

Signed by :

Philippe Basabose

Dr. Philippe Basabose, Professor

President, IGICUMBI – Voix des Rescapés du Génocide contre les Tutsi

CC :

- 1) H.E. António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations Organization
- 2) H.E. Alessandro Chiocchetti, Secretary General of the European Parliament
- 3) H.E. Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
- 4) H.E. Donald Trump, 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 Sir Alan Campbell, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the UK House of Commons
- 7) The Rt. Hon Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada
- 8) H.E. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic of France
- 9) The Rt. Hon Bart De Wever, Prime Minister of the Belgian Federal Government
- 10) The Rt. Hon Friedrich Merz, Chancellor of Germany
- 11) Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia, Speaker of the House of Commons, Canada
- 12) H.E. Yaël Braun-Pivet, President of the National French Assembly
- 13) Hon. Thom van Campen, Chairman of the Dutch House of Representatives
- 14) H.E. Pierre-André Page, President of the National Council of Switzerland
- 15) H.E. Peter De Roover, President of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives
- 16) Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Secretary General of the Commonwealth
- 17) Hon. Marco Rubio, United States Secretary of State
- 18) Hon. Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Canada
- 19) Hon. Mike Waltz, USA Ambassador to the United Nations
- 20) H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, Chairperson of the African Union
- 21) H.E. Volker Türk, High Commissioner of the United Nations on Human Rights
- 22) H.E. Dr. Barham Salif, High Commissioner of the United Nations for Refugees
- 23) Mr. Philippe Bolopion, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch
- 24) Dr. Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International
- 25) Hon. James P. McGovern, Co- Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
- 26) Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Co- Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights
- 27) Hon. Stephen Patrick Mbundi, East African Community Secretary General
- 28) H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, Chairman of the Southern African Development Community
- 29) Hon. Idrissa Sow, Chairperson of the African Commission on People's and Human Rights
- 30) Mr. Alexis Deswaef, President of the International Federation of Human Rights

Bcc:

- 1) H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda and President of the RPF-Inkotanyi
- 2) Hon. Gertrude Kazarwa, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Rwanda
- 3) Hon. Christophe Bazivamo, Secretary General of the RPF-Inkotanyi