

Memorandum from the Rwandan community of Europe on the invitation of President Paul Kagame to the European Development Days from 7 to 8 June 2017

Introduction

There can be no genuine and sustainable development outside of impartial and democratic institutions. Shortly after the President of Rwanda has changed the constitution to remain in power indefinitely and the European Union has decided not to send observers for the presidential elections in August 2017, associations and organizations of Rwandans living in Europe were dismayed to learn that president Paul Kagame of Rwanda has been invited to participate in the European Development Days. Indeed, Rwanda is often cited as a model for development in Africa and its president as a visionary leader.

But what is the reality of this development success put forward by the media and lobby groups pro FPR (Rwandan Patriotic Front, ruling party since 1994)? What is the true nature of the regime led by Paul Kagame?

For the period 2016-2030, the United Nations has adopted 17 sustainable development goals, including objectives to combat poverty, hunger, inequality or injustice, and to promote peace, Education, health, or decent work. Bearing in mind these objectives, in this memorandum, we aim to draw your attention to some of the essential facts relating to the current socio-economic and political situation of Rwanda, that are beyond misleading rhetoric developed by RPF lobbyists,

Manipulation of economic data.

The rhetoric around the Rwandan economic miracle is not supported by empirical evidence. Several researchers and scholars such as F. Reyntjens¹, A. Ansoms², E. Marijnen, G. Cioffo, J. Murison, D. Himbara³ and many others have shown that the data on poverty reduction and inequality provided by the Rwandan regime have been manipulated in recent years in order to keep a good image in the eyes of investors and aid donors.

Food Insecurity and Growing Poverty.

Rwanda is now experiencing rural poverty, food insecurity and an unprecedented unemployment rate. In Rwanda, several households are currently experiencing hunger. According to the report of the World Food Program in 2015, there are currently more stunted children than there were 10 years ago due to malnutrition. The situation of famine that has already lasted too long is so dramatic and above all leaves no hope to the Rwandans to such an extent that they have had to find a fairly explicit name 'NZARAMBA' (meaning, literally, 'I will live longer').

The Rwandan authorities attempt to deny that reality and choose to speak of a simple passing crisis. "Nzaramba" rages throughout the country and affects a large segment of the population. Many Rwandans flee to neighbouring countries, mainly to Uganda. According to many

¹ Filip Reyntjens, 'Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics: Poverty Reduction Rwandan-Style and How the Aid Community Loves It', African Arguments, 2015 <<http://africanarguments.org/2015/11/03/lies-damned-lies-and-statistics-poverty-reduction-rwandan-style-and-how-the-aid-community-loves-it/>> [accessed 24 May 2017].

² An Ansoms and others, 'Statistics versus Livelihoods: Questioning Rwanda's Pathway out of Poverty', Review of African Political Economy, 2016 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2016.1214119>>.

³ David Himbara, Kagame's Economic Mirage (North Charleston, S.C.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).

observers, analysts and researchers⁴, this famine is one of the direct consequences of the cynical political choices concerning in particular the agrarian reforms imposing, among others, single crop farming. These reforms have benefited a very small number of wealthy producers and have caused rising food prices and thus malnutrition among the masses of small farmers and the less affluent.

Important gaps in the health system.

The Rwandan regime portrays the 'Mutuelle de Sante'' as an innovative and successful national health insurance scheme. But the reality is that this scheme is poorly managed, inefficient and not at all sustainable. Membership is mandatory. Those who lack sufficient income with no money to pay, are threatened with imprisonment or forced to sell what they own, including their land, food, shelter or livestock. Moreover, despite all these sacrifices, many of them do not find the health care or medicines they need, either because the government does not pay the necessary matching funds, or because these funds are diverted or poorly managed.

Furthermore, the health system in Rwanda is still rudimentary: insufficient of trained personnel (doctors, nurses, midwives, dentists ...)

Monopoly and inequalities.

The RPF companies, such as Crystal Ventures, which includes Ruliba Clays Ltd, Inyange Industries, Mutara Enterprises, East African Granite Industries, Bourbon Coffee, CVL Developer, Real Contractors, Intersec, GPS Ltd, NPD Cotraco, MSG. and others monopolies in almost all sectors of the Rwandan economy. This creates a situation of unfair competition in which local businesses, in particular small businesses and SMEs, cannot develop. A small group of people close to the government are taking advantage of the country's economic space.

The public policies that the regime is putting in place aim to perpetuate this system of privileges, which makes its protected, already rich, richer and the poor poorer. One of the illustrations of these profound and dangerous disparities in wealth is the personal case of President Paul Kagame, who owns, among other things, private jets rented to the state at a high price, which he himself fixes in order to gain incredible financial benefit while famine wreaks havoc across the country, students without scholarships, medicine lacking in hospitals ... Another example illustrating the deliberate policy of institutionalizing deep inequalities is the shabby wage which the regime has decided to give to teachers.

A primary school teachers who has just started his or her career receives only a salary of 44,000 FRW, ie less than 50 euros per month (1 euro = 943 FRW at 28-05-2017). A minister receives a salary of more than 3,000,000 FRW, if one considers all the other advantages like the rent of the house, communication costs ... which are granted to him or her. This is more than 68 times the salary of a teacher.

Social exclusion.

The RPF regime led by Paul Kagame excludes part of the population on ethnic basis. The Hutus and the Twa are excluded from real power (apart from some political posts without real power).

A small group of Tutsis gravitating around the dictator monopolized military, political and economic power. A recent study by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) led by Professor Andreas Wimmer revealed that Syria, Sudan and Rwanda were the most discriminatory countries today. This study draws attention to the fact that the exclusion of ethnic

⁴ Neil Dawson, Adrian Martin, and Thomas Sikor, 'Green Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications of Imposed Innovation for the Wellbeing of Rural Smallholders', *World Development*, 78 (2016), 204–18, University of East Anglia, Norwich, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.10.008>>. Voir aussi: Serge Dupuis, 'Commémorer Le Génocide Des Rwandais Tutsis à Kigali? Le Rwanda Aujourd'hui' (Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2016) <https://jean-jaures.org/sites/default/files/rwanda_sergedupuis.pdf>.

groups from power is a breeding ground for civil war and violent conflict⁵. It should be noted that this social exclusion affects women even more fundamentally.

Unfair, too high, arbitrary taxes.

Many SMEs are forced to end their activities because of high taxes. In addition, the regime obliges Rwandans to make so-called voluntary contributions. These actions are not new. Already in 2012, US Department of State's Country Reports for Human Rights Practices for 2012⁶ reported these forced contributions to funds like Agaciro.

Rwandans fear the period of the presidential elections, because of forced contributions they are requested to do, to fund elections while they have no sufficient means.

In this regard, RPF regime has recently ordered Rwandan employees to pay 50% of their salary as a "special contribution" to the campaign of Paul Kagame, RPF candidate for the of presidential elections scheduled for the next August. Meanwhile large amount of money is being paid to private lobby groups around the world to continue to sell Paul Kagame's image as an excellent leader.

Poor quality education and mass unemployment:

Education and training, which are normally major pillars of development, are neglected in Rwanda. The quality of education in public schools that accommodate the majority of Rwandan children is very poor. Primary school teachers are poorly paid deliberately. Rich parents send their children to expensive private schools and / or to universities in the West.

The UK Department for International Development, which provides considerable financial support to the education sector in Rwanda, is sad to say that *"achieving a level of schooling for almost all children, the vast majority of whom have no level of literacy or basic calculation is not, in our opinion this is a sign of successful development. This represents a low return on investment ..."*

This low level of education exacerbates the problem of unemployment. According to the report of the African Development Bank 2012, 42% of young people are unemployed or underemployed in rural areas. This rate of unemployment has never ceased to increase.

Refugee problem:

Rwanda now has the largest number of refugees abroad in its history. These refugees are excluded from their country's benefits. The Kigali regime continues to pursue the political refugees in their countries of exile. For example, Mr Sendashonga, former Minister of the Interior under the presidency of Mr Kagame, was assassinated in Nairobi in May 1998. More recently, in January 2014, Mr Karegeya was assassinated in South Africa.

Totalitarian regime, lack of rule of law, lack of freedom of expression, unpunished crimes:

The principle of separation of powers remains utopia in Rwanda. All powers (executive, legislative and judicial) are concentrated in the hands of a dictator and his protégés. They exercise them through the security services. Political space is locked.

As in all totalitarianisms, the regime seeks to control everything. Laws on the crimes of divisionism or genocidal ideology are implacable weapons against those who dare to criticize power. Opposition leaders like Mrs Ingabire, Mr Mushayidi ... are in prison.

⁵ Rapport Du Projet Mapping Concernant Les Violations Les plus Graves Des Droits de l'homme et Du Droit International Humanitaire Commises Entre Mars 1993 et Juin 2003 Sur Le Territoire de La République Démocratique Du Congo (Nations Unies/HCDH, Août 2010), §517
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_MAPPING_REPORT_FINAL_FR.pdf> [accessed 8 August 2013].

⁶ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012
<<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2012humanrightsreport/#wrapper>> [accessed 30 May 2017].

The 2017⁷ Freedom House report considers Rwanda to be "a non-free country" where political rights and civil liberties are flouted.

The Reporters Without Borders report of 2017 indicates that Rwanda ranks 159 out of 180 countries in terms of media freedom, behind countries that have been devastated by war like Liberia 94, Sierra Leone 85, Afghanistan 120, South Sudan 145, Palestine 135, Central African Republic 113, DRC 154, Angola 125 and Iraq 158. According to this report of 2017 "censorship and self-censorship are omnipresent in Rwanda".

Journalists critical of the government run the risk of being labelled "divisionists", a crime punished by several years of imprisonment. President Kagame is trying to stay in power for as long as possible to avoid to be held accountable for countless atrocities and crimes he is suspected to have committed against Rwandan people and the African Great Lakes region. Expert reports, such as the Gersony report or the UN Mapping report, are well documented. This latest UN report, published in 2010, refers to crimes that could be described as "genocide" in the following terms: "The widespread and systematic attacks described in this report targeting many Rwandan Hutu refugees and members of the Hutu civilian population and their deaths, reveal several damning elements which, if proved in a competent court, could be classified as crimes of genocide"⁸

Repression, terror, violence against women, children ...:

To remain in power, the RPF and its president resort to violence, terror and torture. In addition to numerous spies, policemen and soldiers, the government "uses" state security agents, better known under the acronym "DASSO" (District Administration Security Service Organ) which monitor every 10 household units. These agents, as well as the military and the police, cause terror among the citizens. They regularly resort to torture. One of the photos dated in 2015 and was even published in a pro-government newspaper "IGIHE".⁹



This violence affects all segments of the population, especially those who dare to criticise authorities, those who are considered second-class citizens, or as "messy" people who make capital look unclean because it must remain "very clean" to impress western aid donors.

⁷ Reporters sans Frontières, Rwanda: Règne de La Censure et L'autocensure | Reporters sans Frontières, 2017 <<https://rsf.org/fr/rwanda>> [accessed 29 May 2017].

⁸ Rapport Du Projet Mapping Concernant Les Violations Les plus Graves Des Droits de l'homme et Du Droit International Humanitaire Commises Entre Mars 1993 et Juin 2003 Sur Le Territoire de La République Démocratique Du Congo (Nations Unies/HCDH, Août 2010), §517 <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_MAPPING_REPORT_FINAL_FR.pdf> [accessed 8 August 2013].

⁹ IGIHE, 2015, <<http://www.igihe.com/amakuru/u-rwanda/article/kigali-abakozi-babiri-ba-dasso>> [accessed 29 May 2017]. La deuxième photo/ source: <http://www.veritasinfo.fr/article-genocide-rwandais-pourquoi-le-vrai-coupable-n-est-pas-la-france-mais-kagame-123267771.html>

Women street vendors are among those "unwanted messy". They are regularly molested and sometimes beaten to death. C. Tertsakian senior researcher of Human Right Watch writes: "

In May [2016], members of the Inkeragutabara, a part-time component of the Rwandan army, tried to seize the vending possessions of Ms Theodosia Mahoro at the Nyabugogo bus station, she was beaten until she dies¹⁰. "This is surprising if we know that Rwanda is presented as a model country because it has the highest percentage of parliamentarian women in the world. Informed work by scholars and academics¹¹ shows that the high number of women in parliament unfortunately does not mean the development of women's rights or empowerment, that this is merely a PR stunt. Street children are also among the "undesirables".

On April 28, 2017, the Kigali City Health and Hygiene Services, while sanitising one of the city's gutters, doused with gasoline street children "who sheltered there before burning them alive. Two of them died there, the third one seen in the photo¹² below, was seriously wounded and with life threatening injuries.



With all these atrocities how can we, honestly, regard Rwanda as a model country for peace and development? One can also ask why a regime that prides itself on having established peace and stability in the country, is constantly deploying armed soldiers to the teeth on every street corner. The answer is obviously simple, the regime is aware that the people it oppresses are not content, that its silence is not worth consent. The regime which has imposed itself by violence knows that it can only maintain itself by terror.

CONCLUSION

The ideology and practices of the RPF regime and its leader Paul Kagame are incompatible with the principles of sustainable development and peace. Some of the main foundations for the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development adopted by the United Nations for the period 2016-2030 are respect for human rights, the rule of law, strong and fair institutions ... These are also indispensable conditions for security, stability and civil peace.

In Rwanda, the lack of freedom of expression, non-respect for civil liberties, violence, terror, discrimination and social exclusion are all obstacles in contradiction with the essence of sustainable development. Supporting or encouraging a totalitarian regime such as the one led by Paul Kagame, on the pretext that the economic growth figures he displays are positive, while very strong inequalities in the distribution of wealth are plaguing the country, and while it is proven that these figures are manipulated in several ways is to become an accomplice in depriving the Rwandan people of an authentic development they deserve.

¹⁰ Carina Tertsakian, 'Arrêter Les Exactions Contre Les Vendeurs Ambulants Au Rwanda', Human Rights Watch, 22 October 2016 <<https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2016/10/22/arreter-les-exactions-contre-les-vendeurs-ambulants-au-rwanda>> [accessed 29 May 2017].

¹¹ Emmanuel Ndahayo et Aimable-André Dufatanye, *La Violence Politico-Militaire Contre Les Femmes Au Rwanda. De Ndabaga à Ingabire* (Lille: Editions Sources du Nil, 2015).

¹² Source photo: Echos d'Afrique, 'Des Enfants de La Rue Brûlés Vifs Dans Des égouts de La Capitale' <<http://www.echosdafrique.com/20170503-kigalirwanda-des-enfants-de-la-rue-brules-vifs-dans-des-egouts>> [accessed 30 May 2017].

To support the RPF regime and its absolute leader is to condemn the future generations of Rwandans not to be born or not to live in a society of peace and prosperity. The development model promoted by the RPF regime is not sustainable because it is brutal, inequitable, unjust, discriminatory because it excludes, marginalises and impoverishes a large part of the population. Such development carries within it the germs of social conflagration and violent conflict that peace-loving women and men must prevent.

Our associations appeal to the international community and on the Belgian as well as European authorities to stop supporting the totalitarian regime of General President Paul Kagame.

We ask you to use your diplomatic, political and financial influence to support the Rwandan people in their struggle for the rule of law and for the establishment of fair and democratic institutions, which alone allow sustainable development.

Done at Brussels, this 31th day of May 2017

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