

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

His Excellency Paul Kagame
President of Rwanda
Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda
1714 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

April 17, 2007

Dear President Kagame,

We are writing regarding the journalist Tatiana Mukakibibi, a producer and host of various shows on Radio Rwanda. The conditions and length of Ms. Mukakibibi's imprisonment raise great concerns to us.

As you may know, Ms. Mukakibibi has been imprisoned since October 1996 and has yet to be tried for the crimes for which she is accused. It appears that she is being held because of her work with the priest André Sibomana, former editor of Rwanda's oldest newspaper Kinyamateka. Reports state that she is being held in extremely harsh conditions in Ntenyo, Gitarama and has been accused of murder yet given no trial. It is reported that she was simply carrying out her job as a journalist and exercising her basic human right to freedom of expression.

We are also concerned about a report from Reporters Without Borders that indicates several editors of the few independent newspapers in Rwanda have been assaulted, harassed, and imprisoned by the government for publishing articles unfavorable to the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Bonaventure Bizumureyi, Jean-Léonard Rugambage, Bosco Gasasira and Charles Kabonero have all been targeted for their articles criticizing the Rwandan government and exposing corruption in sectors of the government.

If these reports are true, we encourage you to immediately take action against the harassment, threats, and arrest of journalists in Rwanda and allow these families to live in peace without the interference of the government. In addition, we urge you to undertake all efforts to ensure the safety of journalists in your nation. Unfortunately, the independent press in Rwanda faces increasing pressure to avoid all reporting critical of the government. Attacks on the independent media in Rwanda should be halted and the freedom of journalists to report on news should be preserved.

We strongly encourage you to investigate Ms. Mukakibibi's case and either grant her a full and fair trial by an impartial tribunal or release her immediately. A free and open press is an essential guarantor of human rights. The censorship, intimidation, imprisonment, and murder of journalists violate not only their personal liberty, but also the rights of those who are denied access to these ideas and information. International law clearly guarantees freedom of expression and the right to a free press, and we urge the restoration of these rights in Rwanda.

Respectfully,

Alan B. Schiff

Dave Lochrack

Eleanor H. Norton

Lamar Smith

Carolyn McCarty

Jim W. Brown

Shirley Fern

Lois Capps

Betty McClellan

Carolyn B. Maloney

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