



Inkingi
Forces Démocratiques Unifiées
United Democratic Forces

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COORDINATING COMMITTEE-COMITE DE COORDINATION

"Pour un Etat de Droit, la Democratie et l'Egalité de chances" ; "For the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity"

Brussels, 13 December 2013

Victoire Ingabire will forever embody our democratic struggle

Dear compatriots, dear friends of Rwanda, all of you who love peace, freedom and democracy,

The verdict has been rendered and it is devastating. Indeed, our party Chair, Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza, has just unjustly been sentenced to 15 years in prison. The verdict of the Supreme Court extended the first judgement of the High Court dated 30 October 2012.

Our first words go to our party Chair, Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza to whom we express our unwavering support and promise to continue the fight she initiated until the total conquest of our rights and freedoms and the total liberation of the Rwandan people from the yoke of dictatorship under which it has been languishing for nearly two decades.

Our words also go to the family of the political prisoner, which has consented to so many sacrifices in the interests of the Rwandan people and which today is deprived of a mother or a wife.

Finally, our words are addressed to all members of FDU-Inkingi and all democrats from all the folks, to tell them: "do not be discouraged, the fight has just begun". Nothing can stop the aspiration of a people for freedom and democracy. Wherever dictatorial regimes have tried to prevent the people from accessing its deep-rooted aspiration, they failed. Certainly, it often took men and women of exceptional courage to get them to fold back their plans. Ms. Victoire Ingabire is one of those.

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Let us recall that the decision of FDU-Inkingi to do politics in Rwanda was made after reviewing all options to restore the democratic rule in Rwanda in face of a dictatorial regime. The peaceful option we chose seemed to be the best to avoid eternal power shift through bloodshed. We always think that too much blood has already been shed in our country and it was important that the Rwandan regime understood that by such an action, we gave it an offer of peace and reconciliation in order to save the Rwandan people from the sufferings of the past.

We will not go through all the incidents that marred this trial from the High Court to the Supreme Court and were identified by both Human Rights NGOs (AI, HRW, etc.) and diplomatic representations who attended the proceedings (intimidation of the accused and her defense counsel, harassment of the accused by special emissaries, unequal treatment between the prosecution and the defense, the use of non retroactive laws, manufactured evidence, intimidation of defense witnesses, etc.).

We will neither dwell on lynching and attacks orchestrated by the government to which Ms. Victoire Ingabire was subjected upon her arrival in Rwanda, attacks by the highest authorities of the state including the President of the Republic and which showed from the start the intent of the dictatorship to specifically block the road to our party Chair and to FDU-Inkingi in general, in order to prevent them from entering the democratic competition.

Let us also remember, that the persecution of FDU-Inkingi's Chair, Ms. Victoire Ingabire was accompanied by that of the party's Interim Secretary General, Mr. Sylvain Sibomana and other members of FDU-Inkingi, including even her staff in order to isolate her, to weaken her and undermine all structures of the party. Currently, other members of FDU-Inkingi have been convicted and/or are awaiting convictions for reasons that are purely political, such as the fact of attending the trial hearings of Ms. Victoire Ingabire. These include Mr. Venant Abayisenga, Mr. Emmanuel Byukusenge, Ms. Leonille Gasengayire, Ms. Jenny Irakoze Flora, Mr. Marcel Nahimana, Mr. Samuel Hitimana, Mr. Christian Tuganemungu, Mr. Norbert Ufitamahoro, Mr. Valens Uwilingiyimana, Mr. Venuste Uwiringiyimana, and other members who have been persecuted in total indifference and trampling of laws yet established by the regime.

The leaders of other opposition parties such Deo Mushayidi, Bernard Ntaganda, Dr. Theoneste Niyitegeka, etc. are also languishing in prison for political reasons.

With the conviction of FDU-Inkingi's Chair, Ms. Victoire Ingabire, the conviction of its Interim Secretary General, Mr. Sylvain Sibomana, as well as the ongoing trials of other party members, the Rwandan government hopes to prevent them from

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exercising their constitutional rights and to decapitate our party; thanks to the laws the government has tailored in order to padlock the political arena.

We hereby recognize the leadership of our party Chair and our party Interim Secretary General because their fight, which is just and legitimate, is also ours. Imprisoned or not, Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza will remain the beacon that will lead us to total democratic victory.

We've already said it at the outset that this trial is political. Nevertheless, we wanted to give to the Rwandan justice system a chance to prove whether it is really independent from the political power. Today's verdict and those that preceded it, definitively prove that we are facing a political conflict that requires a political solution.

This is why we once again solemnly request direct negotiations with the Rwandan government to find appropriate and lasting solutions to problems of democracy, governance, justice, reconciliation, etc. to prevent other mayhem and to enable all components of the Rwandan people to live together in mutual respect and to guarantee the rights and freedoms of everyone.

We condemn such acts that are outrageous for a respectful state and call upon the international community, Rwanda's donors, friends of Rwanda, the countries of the Great Lakes region in Africa, the United Nations, the European Union and all the people who love peace and democracy to use their influence and request the Rwandan government to release Ms. Victoire Ingabire and all other political prisoners and accept democratic rules by letting all political parties to freely operate in compliance with the Constitution.

To the Rwandan regime, we reiterate once again, our appeal so that it may exercise restraint and regain its senses.

Thank you for your attention.

Dr. Emmanuel Mwiseneza

Commissioner for Information and Communication

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