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**COORDINATING COMMITTEE-COMITE DE COORDINATION**

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

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Paris, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

**Rwanda: Police must be held accountable for the soaring disappearance rate.**

These past few months, a number of reports that the police failed to respond to the wave of disappearances of an astounding number of civilians in different parts of Rwanda have reached an alarming level. Most of these cases occurred in Rubavu District in Western Province, Musanze District in Northern Province and Nyarugenge District in Kigali City Province. The role of the police and other security forces must be fully investigated. They need to take stock of their inability to solve many serious crimes and summary executions committed by their members.

Reliable information indicates that most of the people gone missing have been abducted by police officers and operatives of secret services on suspicion of collaborating with the FDLR, a Rwandan armed group based in Eastern DRC. In some cases, the whereabouts of the victims are still unknown since March 2014. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has investigated some of these cases and has recently reported that it has received information that some of the people who were forcibly disappeared were detained by Rwanda Defense Forces (RDF) and believes that they may be in military custody. The Rwandan military has denied.

Indeed, on April 30, 2014, while touring Musanze and Burera Districts in Northern Province, the Local Government Minister James Musoni, warned residents that speaking to the enemies of the government, namely political opponents or dissidents, is criminal. He advised any suspect to confess to the police or face tougher consequences. The government's position has been so far controversial. On May 16, 2014, the Internal Security Minister Sheikh Mussa Fazil Harerimana, in an interview with the state sponsored newspaper Izuba

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Rirashe, acknowledged being aware and very concerned of such an alarming spate of enforced disappearances. However, on May 19, 2014, reacting to Human Rights Watch report, the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Damas Gatare awkwardly rubbished HRW report but accidentally revealed that they have been holding incommunicado more than 35 people for several weeks without producing them before a court of law. The Police Force must expose those accountable for its failings in this respect.

The absence of thorough investigations on allegations of summary executions and Lethal abuse from police personnel and security officers is eroding the public confidence in the force. For example, the executive secretary (of Cyuve sector) Alfred Nsengimana received hollow points bullets while handcuffed and in the hands of the police on 16 May 2014. That was a few days after his kidnapping by unknown gunmen. "Reacting to this murder, ACP Damas Gatare said: "Nsengimana, while taking the field investigations team to a place where he said other guns were hidden, tried to escape and he was shot and killed by a Rwanda Correctional Services guard."

The modus operandi of those serial disappearances gives an impression of a highly coordinated manhunt. In most cases, victims have been abducted at gun point by people armed with pistols and rushed into tinted vehicles.

Letters from family members of missing persons have remained unanswered. On 14 April 2014, Alphonse Gakuru family (resident of Rubona cell, Nyamyumba Sector, Rubavu District, Western Province) requested the local authorities to investigate the whereabouts of their 28 year daughter, Anne Marie Murekatete, abducted from Gatyazo health unit (a branch of Kigufi Health Centre, Kinigi cell) on 18 March 2014. Up to date, there has been no reaction from the authorities.

The political party FDU-Inkingi would like to remind Rwanda's international donors that their silence kills numerous innocent Rwandans on a daily basis because of their continuing support to such a totalitarian regime instead of fostering the emergence of a genuine democratic and power sharing system. Donors should use their leverage on President Paul Kagame and keep unrelenting pressure for a political dialogue with his opposition. They should also remind President Paul Kagame of his accountability in war crimes, crimes against humanity and others. Otherwise, the history will accuse their leaders of active complicity in such sufferings of the Rwandan people.

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