



PLATFORM AMAHORO PC – FDU INKINGI – PDP IMANZI – PS IMBERAKURI – RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS (RNC)

PRESS RELEASE N. 006

A REFERENDUM TO ENTRENCH THE REPRESSIVE REGIME OF GENERAL PAUL KAGAME IS DISASTER FOR RWANDA.

The Rwandan Opposition political platform, composed of Amahoro PC, FDU-Inkingi; PDP-Imanzi; PS Imberakuri and Rwanda National Congress- RNC, has learnt with dismay and condemns in the strongest terms possible the presidential order issued by General Paul Kagame, setting the dates for a referendum for the population to endorse his dream to become life President. The order sets the 17th December for Rwandans abroad to vote, and December 18 for those in the country. The date was set following a decision of the sole party RPF and its President General Paul Kagame. The Electoral Commission was side-lined in the decision making process contrary to normal procedure and according to reliable information the funding will come from money extorted from the already overtaxed Rwandan citizens.

On Thursday 10th December 2015, at 2pm two members of PDP-Imanzi and FDU-Inkingi political parties, Mr Jean Marie Vianney Kayumba and Mr Fabian Twagirayezu respectively were arrested at the Prime Minister's Office after they handed over a copy of a letter addressed to local administrative authorities requesting an authorisation to organise a peaceful demonstration against the referendum scheduled for the 17th and 18th December 2015. They were taken to the Police, interrogated before being released. The purpose of the demonstration is to show to the world that the RPF-Inkotanyi move to organise a referendum, whose outcome is known in advance, which is aimed at allowing Kagame to remain in power beyond 2017 does not go down well with many Rwandans.

The referendum will endorse the constitution amendment that reduces presidential terms from seven to five years and maintains the two-term limit. As the amendment is tailored to fit President Kagame, the new amendment makes an exception for General Paul Kagame to run for another seven-year term till 2024. After those seven years, he could then potentially run for another two terms of five years each, which would extend his totalitarian and repressive rule to 2034. And nothing stops him from using the same argument for a new referendum to change the constitution for him to be crowned king of Rwanda or an exception to allow him to appoint a successor from his newly formed dynasty.

The short time taken in setting the date for the referendum after the meeting of the Executive Committee of the ruling Party RPF demonstrates the total disregard that the RPF leadership has for wider open debate and consultation on the referendum. RPF has become law of the land. The normal channel of communication, the electoral commission was ignored.

The move belies the image bestowed upon President Kagame by his friends and lobby groups as a visionary leader. He has thus shown his true colours as a self-seeking individual obsessed with absolute power irrespective of human sacrifices. In 2034, he would have served 34 years as President and 6 years as the real power behind the throne when serving as Vice President and Minister of Defence. The new move to tailor a constitution to one man is putting the country on a perilous path to a potential violent change in Rwanda that has marked Rwanda in 1959, 1973, 1994.

We call on the genuine representative of the people in the two chambers of Parliament in Rwanda to stand out and be counted as defenders of people's interests. By helping entrench a repressive system, they are making themselves complicit, and therefore accountable for the negative outcome of this anti people conspiracy.

The international community must take a stand and take action for as Prof. F. Reyntjens expert on the Great Lakes pointed about 10 years ago: *"By indulging in wishful thinking, the international community is taking an enormous risk and assuming a grave responsibility. While it is understandable that the 'genocide credit' and the logic of 'good guys and bad guys' should have inspired a particular understanding of a regime born out of the genocide, this complacent attitude has incrementally, step by step, contributed to a situation that may well be irreversible and that contains seeds for massive new violence in the medium or long run* Prof. F. Reyntjens African Affairs, Vol. 103, No. 411, April 2004, pp. 208-9 ¹

There are no more excuses to stand on the fence as the writing is clear on the wall: General Kagame is making a recipe for future instability in Rwanda, something that the 2003 constitution had tried to avoid by limiting the presidential term limits to 7 years' terms.

Done in Brussels, December 11, 2015.

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¹ quoted in the RESEARCH PAPER 06/51 25 OCTOBER 2006 for the House of Commons