



INKINGI
Forces Démocratiques Unifiées
United Democratic Forces



☐: (+250) 728636000

☐ info@fdu-rwanda.com

☐: (+32)478973762 , (+33)650293997, (+44)7982381717

<http://fdu-rwanda.com>, <http://victoire-ingabire.com>

COMITE DIRECTEUR – STEERING COMMITTEE

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

PRESS RELEASE

General Paul Kagame designated “against his will!” as a candidate of the RPF Inkotanyi during the August presidential election.

Following the plebiscite of General Paul Kagame as a candidate of the RPF-Inkotanyi in the August presidential election in Rwanda, the FDU-Inkingi, a political party of the opposition to the regime in place in Kigali, has the honor to address to the Rwandan people and the international community the following observations:

General Paul Kagame feigned a regret that he had to run for a third time as a candidate in the presidential election. In his speech addressed to his followers after his plebiscite as a candidate for his own succession, General Paul Kagame declared: "You asked me to stay and here I remain...". He seemed to regret the fact that he has to remain and invited his supporters to start thinking about the best scenario at the end of the upcoming seven-year term. Meanwhile, he boasted confidence in the victory of the FPR-Inkotanyi - his own victory - of which he said he knows all of its strength.

We, FDU-Inkingi, are of the opinion that if General Paul Kagame did not really want to cling to power, he should have done the following:

A. Accept democratic pluralism:

If all of Rwandan men and women were united, nothing could be out of our reach. We would work together, and our diversity would be our main asset. Everyone would contribute in constructive ideas and our cherished Rwanda would always be the winner. This has nothing to do with the current culture of cheerleading the ideas of one person. If General Paul Kagame did not wish to remain in power for a long time, he should have allowed Rwandan citizens to vote freely, without letting his judiciary and security services to go after them, supposedly because these citizens might have been stirring up the population against his authority.

B. Enforce civil rights and freedoms:

If General Paul Kagame does not wish to remain in power for a long time, he should accept what he has always considered as an accessory: freedom, democracy and democratic pluralism. The debate of ideas is essential for Rwanda. Should we have had this freedom of opinion and political

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pluralism in Rwanda, we would not have today the so-called Nzaramba (*long-lasting*) famine, which is primarily due to the hazardous and precipitous reforms in agriculture, such as the scandalous monoculture policy. When these famous reforms were launched, we drew attention to the disastrous impact they would have on the population. The government did not listen to us because we are an opposition party. Now the consequences are there. Each time, they do not learn any lesson from the mistakes of the past and today's consequences of those mistakes to foster changes where they are needed and engage the country in a new direction. We cannot stop such a famine if the people who have embezzled public funds from development projects, instead of being prosecuted and forced to pay back that money, are rewarded with more prestigious positions. These people are now called the "big fish" by the Rwandan people. We are of the opinion that if the political space were open in the country, all of these abuses and disastrous choices of politics and economic conjuncture would not have taken place. There would also have been no embezzlement of public funds because we would have had an independent judiciary that could have done its job. The country's resources would also be shared equally among all Rwandans. But now hunger is raging in the countryside as a result of such a monopoly in reasoning and common sense!

C. Diversify the arcana of power:

As long as individuals, institutions and ideas all revolve around one person and around the same political formation, we may have 7, 14 or 21 years, but we will always be at the same starting point. As long as the entire executive, legislative and security apparatus is exclusively controlled by one and same group, the people may continue to dream but there will be no change in the daily lives of the Rwandan people. If General Paul Kagame really wants a palpable change for the Rwandan people, he should acknowledge that the local administrative structures should not exclusively be controlled by individuals from his political party. These structures could be run by independent individuals or by elected officials from political parties, provided that the political space is open and that the election is truly free and fair at all levels. The judiciary should not be used for the RPF-Inkotanyi's own interests, but rather for the benefit of all of the Rwandan people. If General Paul Kagame does not really want to cling to power, he should acknowledge that individuals that are not members of the RPF-Inkotanyi may also have constructive ideas and that, first of all, these individuals should express their opinions freely. This is the only condition for a real change that the Rwandan people are longing for. If General Paul Kagame decides to continue to monopolize the political space in Rwanda, he may consider anyone who dares to give a critical opinion as an enemy who deserves repression and imprisonment. By persisting in such a mentality, there can be no other leader in Rwanda. Apparently, General Paul Kagame holds in his hands the knot of Rwanda's problems and their solutions!

Done in Brussels, Belgium, on June 18, 2017

Joseph Bukeye

2nd Vice-President of the FDU-Inkingi

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