



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

## PRESS RELEASE

### **RWANDA REGIME MOCKS THE UNITED NATIONS: A PEACEFUL PROTEST BY CONGOLESE REFUGEES REPRESSED IN BLOOD IN THE UNHCR COMPOUND.**

The Rwandan opposition political platform condemns in the strongest terms possible the killings of Congolese citizens of Tutsi origin and enforced disappearances of their leaders. These refugees were shipped to Rwanda by the RPF in 1996 when it was preparing the invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo, then called Zaïre, telling them that it wanted to save them from a looming Tutsi genocide in Eastern Congo. While government sources admit 5 dead and 20 injured, reports from refugees themselves speak of 75 dead and a hundred injured. They also report enforced disappearances of refugees and opinion leaders those that the Rwandan regime suspect of being leaders of the demonstration or simply opinion leaders in the community.

We are shocked by the silence of the international community over this ignominious crime and totally reject the template diplomatic language used by the [UNCHR spokesperson Cécile Pouilly](#) relating to the slaughter of Congolese refugees living in Rwanda. Her statement tends to suggest a *confrontation* between the Police and refugees when it was *an armed assault* on unarmed peaceful demonstrators, and to consider the murder of refugees as simply *“unacceptable use of disproportionate force”*. She also calls on *“refugee leaders to show a sense of responsibility to avoid further “confrontation” and again urges them to “respect laws” and seek solutions to all their grievances through peaceful “negotiations”* as if they have broken the law by staging a peaceful demonstration. The statement seems to rubber stamp the measures taken by the repressive Rwandan government to arrest refugee leaders as law breakers. To add insult to injury, the UNHCR calls on the accused i.e. the government of Rwanda *“to investigate the circumstances of this tragic incident.”* The death of more than 50 people and hundreds injured and abducted is merely qualified as *“tragic incident”*.

Despite the much-publicised problem of food shortage as the cause for the demonstration, refugee concerns are more complex. According to reports from refugees and those who are close to them, this problem was the last straw that broke the camel’s back. Their grievances also included: poor health care, poor education, a perception that the Rwandan government wants to naturalise them forcefully and want to be repatriated or resettled in a third country which is not Rwanda, the camp being used as a recruitment reservoir of the Rwandan army, particularly the presidential guard, the special forces, and elite Police, forceful recruitment of refugees to send them in military expeditions in the DRC where many get killed and when they become handicapped or demobilised they are dumped back in the camp, where they become destitute as they no longer qualify to get UNHCR assistance. They also complain about being denied the right to organise formal remembrance ceremonies of their loved ones who were massacred in different camps i.e. Mudende, leading them to validate their suspicion that their loved ones were killed by the RPF army in order to accuse the army of late President Habyarimana of having carried out the atrocities; they also have serious concerns that their application for resettlement abroad are swapped and given to Rwandans, allegedly intelligence agents to spy on Rwandans refugees abroad.

We may recall that President Kagame had used the same tactic to destabilise Burundi. He had equally wanted to scare Tutsi in Burundi of a looming genocide to bring them to refugee camps in Rwanda and then use refugee camps as [recruitment ground for rebels to destabilise Burundi](#).

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*La Plateforme P5 est une coalition des organisations politiques AMAHORO P.C, FDU - INKINGI, PDP - IMANZI, PS - IMBERAKURI ET RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS (RNC); The platform P5 is a coalition of political organizations AMAHORO P.C, FDU - INKINGI, PDP - IMANZI, PS - IMBERAKURI and RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS (RNC); Plateforme P5 ni urugaga rw'amashyaka n'imitwe ya politiki AMAHORO P.C, FDU - INKINGI, PDP - IMANZI, PS - IMBERAKURI n'IHURIRO NYARWANDA (RNC);*

It is quite surprising that these refugees would be shot at and killed for demanding to return to the DRC in case they are not resettled in a third country. We would like to recall that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo signed an agreement with CNDP on 23/03'2009 which included the peaceful return of Congolese refugees living in Rwanda. As part of the implementation of the agreement a programme called "Programme National de stabilisation et de reconstruction" (STAREC) was signed on the 29/06/2009. This was followed by a tripartite agreement (DRC-Rwanda UNHCR). The technical working group of the three parties relating to the practical modalities for the peaceful return of Congolese refugees to the DRC was held in Kigali on the 17/02/2010 and on 27-30 July 2010 in Goma. At the Goma meeting it was reported by a UNHCR delegate Salif Kagyi that more than 80% of refugees wanted to return to the DRC. The DRC government set up what was called "Comité Local Permanent de réconciliation", organised at the lowest administrative unit to welcome Congolese refugees.

It is breathtaking hypocrisy on the part of the Rwandan government and the United High Commission for Refugees to push for the implementation of the cessation clause to force unwilling Rwandan refugees to return to Rwanda to be subjected to a repressive regime, while they deliberately refuse to implement the wish of the Congolese refugees wishing to return home, including shooting at them to force them to stay.

These innocent refugees were naïve like other Rwandans before them in believing in the compassion of a repressive regime, based on the fact that they are of Tutsi ethnic origin, have family members, i.e. brothers, husbands, sons in the Rwandan army and Police, and have been brought by the regime to protect them from alleged ethnic cleansing in the Congo. They were naïve that being in the compound of the UNHCR would be a protection from the wrath of a totalitarian regime that would not tolerate any bad precedent that would tempt the oppressed population to imitate. As to the UN protection, little did they know that the Rwandan army butchered more than four thousand internally displaced Hutu in a UN camp in the neighbouring province of Kibeho in the presence of UN troops in April 1995. Some members of the Australian team who were present are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Rwandan opposition political platform calls on the international community and in particular the United Nations High Commission on human rights to set up an independent enquiry into the killings of the Congolese refugees in Kiziba in order to bring the perpetrators to face the full force of the law.

We call for an independent commission to examine the concerns expressed by refugees.

We call on the UNHCR for refugees to facilitate talks between all stakeholders to implement agreements signed between Rwanda the DRC and UNHCR for the smooth and orderly return of Congolese refugees, living in Rwanda.

We appeal on Rwandans to fully realise that what happened to the refugees in Kiziba refugee camp is yet another proof that peace, reconciliation and stability in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Rwanda are interlinked and that the citizens of this region irrespective of their ethnic, regional and faith affiliation and not the international community bear the primary responsibility to achieve them.

Done in London on February 27, 2018

Justin Bahunga

Chair

Diplomacy Commission – P5-Platform

[infocomrelext@fdu-rwanda.com](mailto:infocomrelext@fdu-rwanda.com)

Phone: +44-7988-883-576