



INKINGI
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United Democratic Forces



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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"

**THE FDU-INKINGI POLITICAL PARTY ADDRESSES TO RWANDANS AND
FRIENDS OF RWANDA ITS BEST WISHES FOR THE YEAR 2017**

Dear Rwandans and Friends of Rwanda,

On the occasion of the end of the year 2016, on behalf of the FDU-Inkingi political party, its Chairperson, Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza, who is unjustly imprisoned to this day, and in my own name, I would like to convey to you our best wishes for the New Year 2017. May it bring peace and full enjoyment of your fundamental human rights so that you may fully exercise your freedom and live as a free people!

As we come to the end of the year 2016, we would like to take stock of Rwanda's political and social situation by looking at what we went through and what we plan to do to make our country a law-abiding state, respectful of the freedoms and rights of the human person; a country characterized by pluralistic, consensual democracy and a justice system that is independent of the interference of the executive branch and military officials or of any other security services; a country without discrimination, which promotes dialogue and reconciliation, ensures mutual respect between Rwandans themselves and with other peoples; a country that promotes integrated development, equity and equal opportunity; a country where the political space is open, where the authorities are accountable to the people.

Dear Rwandans,

Six years have passed since our Party Chairperson, Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza, was arbitrarily arrested and unjustly sentenced. She was imprisoned as she was carrying a message from her party to the Rwandan people; a message about:

- peace
- the right to freedom of thought and conscience for every Rwandan;
- the right to freedom of opinion and expression and participation in the development of the country;
- mutual respect and empathy between Rwandans, with the right to bereavement and non-discriminatory burial;
- freedom of entrepreneurship, including the right of the farmer to use his/her farm reasonably for the benefit of his/her household;
- the right to participate in the governance of the country and to take part in the conduct of public affairs in his/her country, either directly or through freely and fairly elected representatives, and the right to equal opportunity in accessing to public service in the country.

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While the party-state Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) claims that it enjoys the full support of the people, it continues to do everything in its power to avoid free and transparent elections; at a time that the RPF government conducts a robust diplomatic campaign to obtain a cessation clause for Rwandan refugees and does everything in its power to force refugees to return home, including the use of Machiavellian tactics of destabilizing them in their host countries; while inviting Rwandans from the diaspora to stop doing politics abroad and to return home to contribute to the development of the country, those who dared respond to the invitation to return home and do politics in the country are persecuted, tortured to force them to join the RPF party, thrown into prison, kidnapped and made to disappear or murdered.

The moment of change is now,

At the end of 2015 a referendum was imposed on the Rwandan people to change the Constitution by a folklore set of petitions orchestrated by the RPF and its satellite political parties. The amendment to the Constitution made an exception for General Paul Kagame to allow him to seek another term of seven years until 2024. After these seven years, Paul Kagame could then still stand for two more terms of five years each, making it possible for him to extend his totalitarian and repressive regime until 2034. The opposition parties and friends of Rwanda have denounced and condemned these manoeuvres which augur badly for the future stability of Rwanda. But the RPF government continues to turn a deaf ear to warnings.

The issue of the lands which have been taken away from the peasants is also very worrying and continues to exacerbate tensions between former refugees who returned home in the 1990s and the people who never fled the country. The peasants were deprived of their lands for the benefit of the regime's dignitaries and their acolytes who are gradually re-establishing the old style feudal serf system. The most recent case is that of Rutsiro District. In addition, the farmers are forced to practice the monoculture and are not allowed to eat their food crops before they have been harvested them and sold them to government designated cooperatives which buy the agricultural products at derisory prices. This has caused a chronic famine in Rwanda that has been nicknamed by peasants as "NZARAMBA" (perennial), even in areas formerly known as the bread basket of the country such as Bugesera, Mutara and the northwest of the country. Those who refuse to plant imposed crops have had their crops uprooted. People are sometimes beaten to death by local authorities on the pretext that they hinder the realization of authorities performance contracts (Imihigo) signed with the government. It is not rare to see security service agents shooting to death hungry people on the pretext that they stole food crops, as if justice no longer exists in Rwanda. As a matter of fact, the death penalty was officially abolished in Rwanda.

At a time when the RPF government claims that healthcare coverage is in full swing, many Rwandans are unable to pay their health insurance commonly known as "mutuels" due to poverty. Here, too, there are several instances of mortality due to beatings and injuries to those allegedly obstructing local authority performance contracts and District Administration Security Service (DASSO); Even those who can afford the cost of their health insurance do not find medicines prescribed by doctors because healthcare centres and hospitals are structurally short of medicines.

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In the field of education, the RPF promised free primary education, but many children cannot attend school because they live in poverty and have nothing to eat. Those who manage to go to school do not receive good education because of overcrowded classes, poorly paid teachers more concerned about their survival, and due to lack of school equipment and scholastic materials that have become the privilege of private schools in the RPF nomenclature. The mediocrity of this education translates into higher unemployment rates among young people, even those with professional and university degrees; this is also reflected in the devaluation of the school certificates and education awards given by Rwandan schools which do not allow the laureates to be eligible to pursue their studies in universities outside Rwanda. They are often obliged to take university access courses.

The rise of the free enterprise of the Rwandan people is handicapped by multiple contributions improvised by and for the RPF. When these contributions are not paid on time, traders are excluded from public procurement tenders, which are already taken over by RPF companies such as Tristar and Cristal Venture.

While schools and hospitals suffer from lack of funds to buy equipment, while students do not receive their scholarships, while teachers are paid too little, the RPF is in armaments race, not to ensure national security and sovereignty, but to subdue and fight against its own population as an occupation force. The army and the security services are no longer in the service of the people but in the service of the rulers and to ensure the perpetuation of the dictatorship in place.

The Rwandan crisis requires the contribution and participation of all of the active forces of the country. The regime in power in place has shown that it is not interested in the dialogue with the political opposition. It is satisfied with the meetings named UMUSHYIKIRANO in which the members of the RPF and its acolytes participate and spend most their time praising and venerating President Kagame. It is not in this kind of folklore that there can be an open and frank debate which should inspire the power in place to reorient its policies.

The RPF will never change its dictatorial nature. We have done everything to bring the regime to its senses, but it remains silent to our calls, even the RPF pioneers have ended up leaving the ship, which is drifting away. We have proved on all aspects that dialogue is the only way to avoid other wars in the country; In any case dialogue is always cheaper than war. Rwandans must understand that they themselves must do everything they can to claim and get their rights and freedoms. They must not continue to be oppressed by the RPF, which looks like an occupation force in their own country.

This why with other parties and political organizations we have decided to create a Platform composed of a broad coalition of key Rwandan partners from all ethnic groups (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa), from all regions of Rwanda, and with a diverse historical background. We are determined to do everything in our power to put in place constitutional mechanisms and institutional power arrangements, as well as security services that would reassure and secure everyone. We are confident that these mechanisms will put an end to the flow of refugees and the various forms of rebellion that result from the absence of such mechanisms. We will also ensure that there is a separation of powers.

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With regard to the elections scheduled for August 2017, as an opposition party, we regard them as stage managed and do not expect much from them. The consecration of the incumbent president for whom the change of the Constitution has been tailored to fit the purpose is an indisputable reality. The underlying manoeuvres will produce the same results and the same effects, especially because the person who is entering the race is the one who establishes the rules of the game, sets up the electoral commission and commands all the security forces that will ensure law and order during elections.

If the ruling power is not able to let the Rwandan people have the right to take part in the management of public affairs of the country and to choose their leaders freely, then we call upon the Rwandan people to fight for their sovereignty. The will of the people is the foundation of public authority.

We wish you all Happy New Year 2017! May it enable you to free yourself and recover your rights; may it bring you prosperity, more justice and social equity, a real and effective reconciliation between all the components of our society; may the New Year bring conditions that are conducive for refugees to voluntarily return home. We hope that the year 2017 will give all Rwandans the right to move freely and to choose their residence within the country as well as the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country without any other conditions or hindrances.

Done in Brussels, Belgium, on December 31, 2016

Bukeye Joseph

2nd Vice President of FDU-Inkingi

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