

Crisis in Rwanda: Kagame Releases Defense Lawyer Erlinder on “Medical Grounds”

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The Associated Press reported on June 17, that Rwanda had released U.S. Law Professor Peter Erlinder from a Rwandan Prison on bail, due to medical conditions. Erlinder remained in a Kigali Hospital due to high blood pressure.

At first the [AP reported](#) that it was unclear whether he will be allowed to leave Rwanda or remain there, under house arrest, like Rwandan presidential candidate Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, whom he traveled to Rwanda to defend against the same “genocide ideology” charges that he was arrested for within days of his arrival.

However, Erlinder’s daughter Sarah, within minutes of the AP report, reported, on [her Facebook group page “Free Prof. Erlinder Now”](#):

“Unconditional release on bail, can return to the US!!! It’s not over, and we won’t believe it until he’s home, but today is a very good day for all of us!!”

Friends and supporters of Professor Peter Erlinder, and of Rwanda’s opposition political parties, had been tensely awaiting news of the ruling all morning, watching Sarah Erlinder’s group page, where someone nervously asked for news of Peter’s health, given that the [Rwanda News Agency had reported this morning, that he remained hospitalized](#) for high blood pressure in Kigali.

Earlier this week the [International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda called for Erlinder’s release, stating that he is immune from prosecution](#) for his work there representing Rwandans accused of genocide related crime, which the prosecution had offered as evidence of his guilt in Rwanda.

Erlinder’s lawyer Kennedy Ogeto, who is also a defense lawyer at the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda, had said that Erlinder’s arrest set a [dangerous international legal precedent](#) which could make it impossible for any lawyer to defend anyone accused in an international court without fearing arrest and prosecution in a country that disagrees with his defense and/or with the court’s decision.

Earlier in the week, Kurt Kerns, Erlinder’s Co Plaintiff’s Counsel in Habyarimana vs. Kagame, said, “At least Kagame took care of our process service issue himself. Since the prosecution introduced Habyarimana vs. Kagame, and quoted language within it, as evidence in court, Kagame and his people can’t claim they haven’t seen it.”

The [wrongful death lawsuit](#), brought on behalf of Agathe Habyarimana and Sylvana Ntaryamira, widows of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President

Cyprien Ntaryamira, accuses Kagame and top officers and officials of ordering the assassination of the two presidents that triggered the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, and of racketeering to plunder the resources of neighboring D.R. Congo—all at a cost of seven million African lives.

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