

Election Campaign in Rwanda: President Kagame Threatens Opposition Candidate With Prison for Talking to Press

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May 14, 2010—The Rwanda New Times reported that Rwandan Prosecutor General Ngoga threatened to jail Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza for speaking with press. Ingabire has not been allowed to register to formally run against Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

She is now facing criminal charges brought against her for challenging [Kagame](#) and his ruling [Rwandan Patriotic Front](#) Party government. According to Ngoga:

“The Prosecution is more specifically concerned with continued posting declarations and newspaper interviews she has been doing. The case against her is not one of robbery in which restraining physical movement would be enough to contain further damage. It is a case of destructive and divisive ideology whose damage does not require physical proximity of the offender.”

[Law Professor Peter Erlinder](#), the U.S. attorney and Lead Defense Counsel at the [International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda](#), who has been retained to defend Ingabire, said:

“Ngoga’s threats reveal that the real purpose of the criminal charges against Madame Ingabire is to serve notice that no political opposition will be tolerated in Rwanda. And, that the 2003 ‘sham elections’ as reported by EU election monitors, and other outside human rights observers, will be repeated in 2010, unless the Rwandan government completely changes its policies to permit a functioning democracy.”

[Ingabire](#) is charged with associating with terrorists, and violations of the “[genocide ideology](#)” statutes creating speech and thought crimes unique to Rwanda, which Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and even the U.S. State Department have denounced.

Prof. Erlinder will appear at Ingabire’s next hearing, on May 24th in Kigali, to insist on her continued release on bail, return of her computers and property, an end to the state’s interference with her presidential campaign and the full disclosure of prosecution evidence and witnesses.

Erlinder has said he intends to argue that Ingabire’s internationally recognized rights to free speech have been violated, and that she is being denied due process.

He has also submitted letters to his Minnesota Senators and Congressional Representative, and to the U.S. State Department, to request protection, stating that he has reason to believe that his own life could be in danger while he is in Rwanda, because of leaked memos identifying him as a foreign enemy of the government and target for assassination.

The [Human Rights Committee of the EU Parliament has written to Rwanda's Ambassador to Belgium Gérard Ntwari. objecting](#) to Ingabire's arrest, and to ongoing repression of political and civil rights, including the right to free speech.

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