

Rwanda's 1994 Genocide and the 2010 Elections

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The memory, consequence, and disputed histories of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, loom large in Rwanda's memory. Whether openly discussed or not, they will hugely influence the nation's 2010 national election.

Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, leader of the [United Democratic Forces of Rwanda](#) arrived at the Kigali, Rwanda Airport on 01.17.2010, returning from 16 years in exile to register her party, in preparation for Rwanda's August 2010 elections. Frank Habineza, leader of the [Democratic Green Party of Rwanda](#), and Bernard Ntaganda, leader of the [Parti Social Imberakuri](#), met her at the airport. All three parties are trying to register and field candidates, including presidential candidates, in Rwanda's August 2010 nation elections.

Rwanda as the Israel of Africa

Rwanda, under the leadership of Rwandan President Paul Kagame and the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) Party, is a close ally of the United States. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking in Kenya at the outset of her 2009 tour of the African continent, pointed to Rwanda as a "beacon of hope for Africa," just as her husband, former President Bill Clinton so often does. On September 24, 2009, [Bill Clinton presented one of his Global Citizenship Awards to Kagame](#), for leadership in public service. Two days later, at his Saddleback Church in Orange County, evangelical Pastor Rick Warren, who has made Rwanda one of his "purpose driven nations," presented Kagame with the second [International Medal of P.E.A.C.E.](#), having presented [the first to George Bush at the close of 2008](#).

U.S., UK, and their allies justify their military support of Rwanda with the genocide narrative that identifies Rwanda as the Israel of Africa and its Tutsi population as the Jews, who deserve special protection because they have suffered a holocaust. The hero of this narrative is Rwandan President Paul Kagame, described as the extraordinary leader who has led Rwandas in their rise from the ashes of genocide, to swear, like the Israelis, "Never again."

Rwanda, the Commonwealth, and human rights

Kagame, however, stands accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, autocratic rule, and political repression, by human rights defenders the world round. On 02.06.2008, a [Spanish Court indicted](#) forty of his top military officers for "crimes including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and terrorism, perpetrated over a period of 12 years, from 1990 to 2002, against the civilian population, and primarily against members of the Hutu ethnic group." They did not indict Kagame himself, stating that he could not be prosecuted as long as he remains a sitting head of state.

Prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government's acceptance of Rwanda into the Commonwealth in November 2008, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative Group objected, presenting a report, written by [Kenyan Judge and legal scholar Yash Pai Ghai](#), who wrote:

"We believe that overwhelming evidence, conveniently ignored by leading Commonwealth states, demonstrates that the government of Rwanda is not sufficiently committed to the protection of human rights and to democracy."

His report elaborated and cited evidence of compromised courts, flawed elections, and human rights violations.

Journalist Derek Ingram, wrote, also for the Commonwealth Human Rights Group, in "Commonwealth Conversation":

"On Rwanda it [the Commonwealth] should wait for next year's presidential elections, send a strong observer group to decide whether they are fair (the last ones were not) and then consider the application at the next CHOGM in 2011." -Journalist Derek Ingram, writing for "Commonwealth Conversation," Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative Group

The Commonwealth Heads of Government welcomed Rwanda nevertheless, thanks to the enthusiastic sponsorship of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and Rwanda's elections are now scheduled for August, seven months away.

Rwanda Elections, August 2010

If the three viable opposing parties, the United Democratic Forces-Inkingi, the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda, and the Parti Social-Imberakuri are allowed to register and participate in free and fair elections, they have a good chance, in coalition, of defeating Rwandan President Paul Kagame and his ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) Party.

However, that's a very big IF.

To register and get a ballot line in Rwanda, a party must first convene, and the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda has now tried to convene five times, only to be met with bureaucratic obfuscation and, on [October 30th, violence](#). Their members have been harassed and arrested.

The [Parti Social Imberakuri](#) has been allowed to register, but the Rwandan Parliament now threatens to take their registration away.

The FDU will now begin its attempt to register, but Rwandan Minister of Internal Security Sheikh Mussa Fazil Harerimana has [already warned the FDU's Umuhoza "against revisionist and Genocide denial pronouncements."](#)

The memory, consequence, and disputed histories of what we know as the [1994 Rwanda Genocide](#), loom large in Rwanda's memory, national consciousness and future as it heads into this national election year, which will conclude in August 2010 polls. Hence, the

headline in the Sunday version of the Rwanda New Times, referred not to the upcoming election but to Ingabire's assertion that not only Tutsis, but also Hutus were killed in the Rwanda Genocide of 1994: "[Ingabire espouses Double Genocide Theory.](#)"

Victoire Ingabire spoke to the elephant in the room, and the reaction, in the press from Kagame's RPF Party, has been swift and vitriolic, accusing her of both "revisionism" and "divisionism," regarding the history of the mass killings in Rwanda in 1994.

Rwandan exiles in the United States and Europe, and seasoned Africa reporters, including Keith Harmon Snow and David Barouski, describe this as a very tense, sensitive, and volatile situation.

Upon her arrival in Kigali, Mrs. Ingabire declared:

"We totally agree and are conscious that there has been a genocide against Tutsis and we seriously and continuously advocate that all those who were responsible be brought before the courts of justice. We also agree that there have been other serious crimes against humanity and war crimes [against Hutus]; those who committed them have to bear the legal consequences. We must all the time remember those tragedies, make sure they don't get ever repeated. We also need to ensure that people's lives are effectively and strongly protected by laws."-[Hungry for truth, peace and justice](#)

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