

US Calls on Rwanda to Release American Lawyer Peter Erlinder

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State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley told reporters on Thursday that the United States is pressing for the release of William and Mitchell College of Law Professor Peter Erlinder, of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Rwandan authorities arrested Professor Erlinder on May 28th, and accused him of genocide ideology, a crime unique to Rwanda, and of denying the Central African country's 1994 genocide.

On Wednesday [Professor Erlinder](#), 62, was hospitalized, after what Rwandan officials and state run media reported as a suicide attempt. [Consular officials have told Erlinder's family, instead](#), that he told them he took an overdose of his high blood pressure and anti-depressant prescriptions, in hopes of being sent to a hospital and thus escaping a squalid jail he was sharing with seven or eight other inmates, where he feared for his safety.

Yesterday, [Kennedy Ogetto](#), one of Erlinder's three lawyers, said that he had spoken to him at the hospital, but only for the two minutes allowed, and, in the presence of the policemen guarding him.

Ogetto also denied Rwandan Chief Prosecutor Martin Ngoga's allegation that Erlinder confessed to [genocide ideology crime like that his client Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza, presidential candidate of the opposition FDU-Inkingi Party is charged with](#).

Ogetto wrote, today, in a report to Erlinder's support team:

"Peter denied all the allegations. He denied his writings constitute any crimes. He emphasized that his writings and speeches are all protected by free speech guarantees under the US Constitution and the laws of the Commonwealth, of which Rwanda is a member. He then stated that he was revoking anything which may have been interpreted as offensive by the Rwandans. We don't consider this to be a confession."

All three of Rwanda's embattled opposition parties, the FDU-Inkingi Party headed by Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza, the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda headed by Frank Habineza, and the dissident wing of the Parti Social-Imberakuri Party headed by Bernard Ntaganda, have called on the Rwandan government to release Professor Erlinder and drop all charges, and to drop all charges against FDU-Inkingi presidential candidate Ingabire, who, like the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda, remains unable to register her party to contest the 2010 election.

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