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Kigali -Rwanda

"Pour un Etat de Droit, la Democratie et l'Egalité de chances" ; "For the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity"

Kigali, 23rd May 2010

Press release

DON'T HOLD IN CONTEMPT YOUR OWN JUSTICE SYSTEM.

As the United States defence legal team led by Professor Peter Erlinder set foot in Rwanda today, a presidential exclusive interview justifying why his government will freeze in jail Ms. Victoire Ingabire, FDU INKINGI presidential candidate, is making headlines. Though the threat is clear crystal, the saddest is that it's full of sheer lies and an obvious contempt of the Rwandan justice. I was honoured by the incumbent's calumination alleging that I confessed to 7 charges out of ten things the prosecution came up with, and that his regime has overwhelming evidence for my trial.

The exclusive interview granted in Kigali last week by President Paul Kagame to Monitor Managing Editor DANIEL KALINAKI (online since 22nd May 2010) is disturbing. Either the Monitor is spreading forgery, fiction or falsification, either the President is overtaking and derailing the justice system he tailored from scratch. In either case, he needs to clear this situation.

He stated: "...Now she's saying that seven of them are actually true (...). Initially she had denied that she only used to just give supportive comments. Then the evidence of these FDLR colonels who are here with us and when they confronted her they said 'you were with us' and she said 'yeah, I'm sorry I visited you so many times'. This is in court of law". He continued: "When we confronted her afterwards she almost collapsed. This is in broad daylight, in courts of law. This is somebody, a candidate, a so-praised opposition leader, yes, but wait a minute; if there are cases to answer, you answer them... This woman will certainly be where she belongs. She was charged in the court of law ..."

I am seriously wondering if the President is talking about my case or another story. Of course every body knows he can arbitrary order my arrest anytime he wants, but if he needs a court of justice to do that job for him he should respect some legal rules as well. The separation of powers and the rule

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of law are guaranteed by the constitution. The President should avoid putting pressure on courts and judges. Most judges in Rwanda are nominated but under the current regime only a super-judge can resist such injunction. Nevertheless it's in nobody's interest to challenge a presidential command. This is a blatant violation of the independence of a judge. The colour of the court ruling in my case will be a result of this unrelenting presidential pressure on the system. We all know that this politically motivated case was initiated by the President who, visibly and closely is still pulling the strings all the steps around.

The current justice system built on scratch in the last decades is still very fragile and politicians, especially the President or any of his cronies should not meddle into pending court affairs and deliberations. How Rwandans and the world will know the truth in case of an expeditive justice? As the case is still pending with the court, there is such thing as sub judice and he can not just publicly comment on a case, interfere with judicial proceeding or put pressure on magistrates and still make people believe there is independent justice. Many Rwandans are victim of similar practices under the mercy of those in power. Justice appeared to be served, but the scars would never heal for the victims, their families and our people. This might be one of the reasons why the regime has sealed off the political space, and is instead yelling out the pretext to avoid backsliding to genocide.

As far as I am concerned, the court hearings on the so-called overwhelming evidence or ghost proofs have not yet started. I was arbitrary arrested on 21st April 2010, and released on bail the second day. Until now the prosecutor is not yet in order with his papers. I have never met the much publicised FDLR renegades in the hands of the regime. There has never been any confrontation. The non-violence is and will always be my motto.

Many questions remain unanswered: how is the President planning to extract forced confessions? Considering the fact that only 3 counts were levelled against my person, while the President is talking about 10, when his services will release and substantiate the remaining charges? Will it happen after the presidential campaign is closed?

Since my return to Rwanda in January 2010, I have been trying to get my political party, FDU INKINGI, registered and by 6 times, the government derailed our constitutional congress. The official reason is the criminal charges levelled and the subsequent never-happening trial.

Don't shy away free and fair competition and to stop using justice for your own purposes. There will be no democracy and justice for all without truth and healing.

Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza, Chair

FDU INKINGI