

Press Release: Answer to Minister Karugarama

In the wake of the French President's visit in Rwanda I salute the courage of reconciliation showed by the two heads of state, Nicolas Sarkozy and Paul Kagame, and daring to "settle the past" for their respective countries.

As this path of reconciliation initiated between the France and Rwanda is courageous, I want to call on both countries to draw the same path that could lead Rwandan Hutus and Tutsis also to settle their past.

I am, along with others, accused by the Rwandan government to be génocidaire on false allegations peddled for 16 years by the Rwandan National Central Bureau, with the help of associations recruited from the 1990s to demonise the Hutu elite and to hunt intellectuals, businessmen and other Rwandan opinion leaders. Much of the evidence produced against me has already been invalidated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Bordeaux High Instance Tribunal in 1997.

Since the early production of these charges in July 1994 in Butare, I have not ceased to claim my innocence. Indeed, my firm belief is that *accepting withstand indefinitely the weight of a crime that you did not commit, be unfairly dubbed as "a genocide criminal" without claiming your innocence is a sprain to the search for truth. This truth must serve a serene justice that respects fairly the rights of both victims and defendants.*

I am pleased to note that during the visit of President Nicolas Sarkozy in Rwanda, the Rwandan regime said that it was finally ready to accept "reconcile nations and turn a page". I am also satisfied to hear that the Rwandan authorities are finally ready to abandon the compulsory guilty plea, as clearly expressed by Mr Karugarama, the Justice Minister; he *"will never seek to blame someone innocent. But national reconciliation also passes through the judicial and diplomatic struggle against impunity"*. This struggle is also mine. Unfortunately, I note that in this fight Kigali is asking France "my condemnation on a diplomatic plate".

I would stress that all Rwandans bear the stigma of what happened from 1990 to now, "absolutely indelible and unacceptable traces". People of the Great Lakes region have suffered enough. Today they need more mediators for the reconciliation than avengers of pseudo-guilty.

I therefore call upon the Rwandan government to accept that be set up *a panel of mediators from the International Criminal Court in The Hague; this panel would hear with the same attention the 40 suspects being sought by the French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière and the Spanish Andreu Merelles on one hand, and on the other hand, 40 suspected among the 106 people that the Kigali government is now seeking abroad.* The truth would gush forth from this reconciling dialogue, which will also take into account outcomes of the trials at the ICTR.

Both parties implicated, will agree on a balanced composition of this panel, because after the reconciliation of Nations, the truth that I demand must serve as a serene justice system to facilitate the reconciliation of people of the African Great Lakes region.

Dr Eugene Rwamucyo