



**ISHYAKA RIHARANIRA ITERAMBERE N'UBWISANZURE KURI BOSE**  
**LE PARTI DU DEVELOPPEMENT ET LIBERTE POUR TOUS**  
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**Bertel Haarder**  
**Chair of Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**The Danish Parliament**

**Kigali, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Mr Haarder,**

We are reaching out to provide our perspective on Rwandan government and what in our view is a viable solution to improve governance in our country, Rwanda.

The Rwandan government has registered some achievements after the end of the civil war and the genocide of the 1990s. Security has been maintained across Rwanda, governing structures have been established and legislations guiding the state's activities have been reformed.

Nonetheless, we are concerned with our government's abuse of human rights and violation of democratic values that have been going on for over a decade. The decrease of participation, rights, inclusion and equality in our country over the past ten years can also be observed on the Mo Ibrahim Index of African governance<sup>1</sup>.

Although the Rwandan government has ratified most international and regional human rights treaties, has a constitution that guarantees human rights to its citizens, it continues to violate its citizens' human rights. Arbitrary detention, including prolonged pre-trial detention, has been reported from our country by United Nations bodies<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists face reprisals, death, enforced disappearance, harassment and broadly defined offences for criticizing the government in Rwanda. Many of our active supporters and independent activists have been victims of these acts<sup>3</sup>. Our government records of human right abuses have been extensively described for over a decade in the EU annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy published on European External Action Service website<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, during the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of Universal Periodic Review on Rwanda's human rights, held in Geneva in January 2021, representatives of various European Union member states voiced their concerns over human rights abuse in Rwanda to our government delegates<sup>5</sup>.

The ruling circle in our country claims to be practising power-sharing consensus democracy with the intent of overcoming ethnic divisions and accelerating development. However, there is no independent mechanism to evaluate the fairness of implemented power-sharing system. Political participation is limited to selected groups. For instance, only political parties affiliated to the ruling party and part of an established political parties' forum are allowed and are financially supported to operate as the opposition in Rwanda. This leaves no space for genuine opposition parties able to provide checks and balances against our government. A decade has passed without our opposition political party having been registered and approved to operate in our country. As a result, political elections are always characterised by limited choice in Rwanda. In particular, serious contenders in Rwanda's presidential elections have regularly been excluded through the use of fabricated charges. We ourselves have been the victims of these heinous practices<sup>6&7</sup>.

Rwandan citizens have the constitutional right to freely express themselves; however, freedom of expression to criticise the government or the ruling party is repressed in our country. Rwanda ranks 155<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in the Global Press Freedom Index 2020<sup>8</sup>.

The Rwandan constitution also provides separation of power to guarantee the rule of law. Nonetheless, the power remains with executive. The judicial system is influenced by the executive that appoints it, especially when ruling on high-profile

<sup>1</sup> <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag/downloads>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publication/easier-said-than-done-estd-report-based-on-the-42nd>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/15/rwanda-disappearances-require-credible-investigations>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/rwanda/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://rw.usembassy.gov/u-s-statement-at-the-universal-periodic-review-of-rwanda/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/08/02/rwanda-silencing-dissent-ahead-elections>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/08/rwandas-repressive-tactics-silence-dissent-before-elections/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/rwanda>



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cases involving the government's critics and interests. The Rwandan parliament's counterbalancing power is weak as it has a biased composition made up of political parties selected and approved by the ruling party. Thus, issues such as public funds invested in sectors that do not alleviate the immediate needs of citizens, illicit expropriation of citizens' properties and the implementation of policies in a manner that lacks sensitivity toward citizens are never debated in parliament. Against that backdrop, the large number of women in the Rwandan parliament gives the impression that its purpose is to portray a good image for the government rather than to genuinely empower women.

In light of all aforementioned violations, the Rwandan government is yet to implement a good governance capable to bring about solid economic transformation and sustainable development in our country. An example of this is the government's development programme, launched in 2000, that promised to transform Rwanda into a middle-income state driven by a knowledge economy by 2020. Despite receiving abundant technical and financial supports from intergovernmental organisations, developed countries and the European Union, the government of Rwanda has not delivered its promise. Instead it has prolonged its delivery to 2035<sup>9</sup>.

In fact, Rwanda's development success stories often conveyed worldwide are flawed. The World Bank had revealed in its eighth edition of Rwanda Economic update published in 2015<sup>10</sup> that *"Rwanda economy can be illustrated by four characteristics namely (i) High growth and low per capita income, (ii) high public and low private investment (iii) low exports and small tradable sector, and (iv) high reliance on aid in the economy."*

The main economic challenges that our country is facing today include low human capital<sup>11</sup>, undeveloped private sector<sup>12</sup>, increasing indebtedness<sup>13</sup>, high youth unemployment, inequalities<sup>14</sup> and persisting higher poverty rate than peers with similar income per capita<sup>15</sup> as well as population happiness deficit<sup>16</sup>. These have exacerbated since COVID-19 pandemic crisis begun<sup>17</sup>. While the Rwandan government has contributed to maintaining peace on an international level, it is alleged to have instigated instability<sup>18 & 19</sup> in neighbouring countries<sup>20</sup>. This situation prevents our country from taking full advantage of regional economic opportunities which are needed to develop its tradeable sector<sup>21</sup>. 27 years after the civil war and the genocide against Tutsi ended in Rwanda, implemented reconciliation policy still has a long way to meet its objectives. We concur with the US and UK's statement of April 2020 on the UN general assembly resolution on the Rwandan genocide that failure to recognise all the victims presents an incomplete picture of our country unfortunate history<sup>22 & 23</sup> and to reconciliation in Rwanda. We believe that this also affects Rwanda's social capital by weakening trust and connection among Rwandans which they need to efficiently work together toward transforming their country. Lastly, the repression of dissenting voices has infused fear in Rwanda's citizens, who in turn abstain from participating in social, economic and political decisions. This results in erroneous national development planning, which affects development operations in Rwanda.

We attribute our government's failure in achieving anticipated results in its development programme to lack of good governance in Rwanda. A governance that limits political space, lacks separation of power and impends freedom of expression and represses any critics to government's development policies cannot indeed lead to sustainable development.

The European Union – that Denmark is a member of - has disbursed at least €860 million to Rwanda under the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund from 2008 to 2020 to support Rwandan government development plan to transform Rwanda into a middle income state by 2020<sup>24 & 25</sup>, an objective the government has not met. The European Union disbursed

9 <https://dalfa.org/en/rwanda-vision-2020-development-programme-scrutiny/>

10 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/publication/rwanda-economic-update-financing-development-role-deeper-diversified-financial-sector>

11 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital#Index>

12 [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/publications\\_ext\\_content/ifc\\_external\\_publication\\_site/publications\\_listing\\_page/cpsd-rwanda](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/publications_ext_content/ifc_external_publication_site/publications_listing_page/cpsd-rwanda)

13 <https://dalfa.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Rwanda-vision-2020-development-programme-scrutiny.pdf>

14 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/07/09/world-bank-country-partnership-framework-cpf-2021-26-to-support-rwandas-strategic-priorities>

15 idem

16 <https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2020/WHR20.pdf>

17 <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/593761612554686869/pdf/Rwanda-Economic-Update-Protect-and-Promote-Human-Capital-in-a-post-COVID-19-World.pdf>

18 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1259339.pdf>

19 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/S\\_2020\\_1283\\_E.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/S_2020_1283_E.pdf)

20 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-burundi-rwanda-un-idUSKCN0VD04K>

21 <https://dalfa.org/en/how-rwanda-can-maximise-its-potentials-in-the-region/>

22 <https://usun.usmission.gov/explanation-of-position-on-the-un-general-assembly-resolution-on-the-rwandan-genocide/>

23 <https://www.un.org/pga/74/wp-content/uploads/sites/99/2020/04/UK-EOP-on-Rwandan-genocide-resolution-20-April.pdf>

24 Republic of Rwanda-European Community Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the period 2008-2013 and 2014-2020.

25 [https://reliefweb.int/report/rwanda/government-rwanda-and-european-union-sign-further-development-cooperation-package-%E2%82%AC89#:text=Rwanda-Government%20of%20Rwanda%20and%20European%20Union%20sign%20further%20development%20cooperation,%E2%82%AC89%20million%20for%20Rwanda&text=The%20European%20Union%20\(EU\)%20will,total%20of%20%E2%82%AC89%20million](https://reliefweb.int/report/rwanda/government-rwanda-and-european-union-sign-further-development-cooperation-package-%E2%82%AC89#:text=Rwanda-Government%20of%20Rwanda%20and%20European%20Union%20sign%20further%20development%20cooperation,%E2%82%AC89%20million%20for%20Rwanda&text=The%20European%20Union%20(EU)%20will,total%20of%20%E2%82%AC89%20million)

20European%20Union%20(EU)%20will,total%20of%20%E2%82%AC89%20million



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some of these fund as General Budget support to the government and other for the development of the rural area, infrastructure for regional interconnectivity, trade, sustainable energy, agriculture and food Security as well as accountable governance in Rwanda.

The act of the European Union, to offer its financial and technical supports to our government is of considerable nature. While some improvements can be noted in the areas the European Union has spent European money in our country, overall poverty remains pervasive, malnutrition and food insecurity levels continue to be high<sup>26</sup>, Rwanda infrastructure competitiveness has declined between 2010 and 2019 and ranks low on road connectivity and electricity access<sup>27</sup>, relationship between Rwanda and its neighbouring countries has deteriorated due to political tensions and these prevent Rwanda trade sector from flourishing. Independent and dependable civil societies remain non-existent in Rwanda. The root cause of these outcomes is not due to lack of support from developed countries but to policies implemented from the above-described governance in Rwanda.

We understand Denmark and Rwanda recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding on political consultations and cooperation on asylum and migration issues. However, in my view, there is an urgent need for the Rwandan government to reform its governance in order to bring about solid social and economic transformation in our country. The proposed reforms implies to revamp the political environment in my country by opening political space and enabling genuine opposition capable to provide checks and balances against the government to operate in Rwanda. Most importantly, the Rwandan government has to respect and comply with the country's constitution in all its endeavours.

My proposal to development partners of our country is to reorient their funds into a bigger project that aims to bring the government and the dissent voices around a table to discuss and establish a new political environment framework that guarantees a good governance in Rwanda. A governance that is capable to safeguard what has been achieved and build on them to reach sustainable development. To Denmark, it is to utilise its voice in international organisations such United Nation, European Union, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and others, and advocates and endorses resolutions that call Rwanda's leadership to reform its governance to enable a sustainable social, economic and political environment which can pave the way for fruitful long term cooperation between Rwanda and Denmark as well as any other development partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing social and economic challenges of our country. This makes it even more vital for the Rwandan government to embrace the proposed governance reforms as they would enable fair and full participation of citizens in social, economic and political decisions of their country and prevent yet another chaos in our country.

We are conscious of the political, social and economic hardships of our country and are convinced that these can only be overcome if our government is prompted to make the necessary governance reforms today. We have a proposal on how this can be achieved and how Denmark as a friend of Rwanda and its new cooperation partner can contribute. As I am not authorised to leave Rwanda, I would like to meet via Zoom with your committee's delegation at any time that suits you so I elaborate my proposal.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza**  
**President of DALFA UMURINZI**

<sup>26</sup> <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/360651529100512847/rwanda-economic-update-tackling-stunting-an-unfinished-agenda>

<sup>27</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf)