Responses to Information Requests

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RWA106286.FE

Rwanda: Treatment by authorities of President Kagamé’s opponents who supported Diane Rwigara during the August 2017 electoral period (2017-May 2019)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Treatment of Diana Rwigara’s Supporters During the August 2017 Electoral Period

   Information on the treatment by authorities of Diane Rwigara’s supporters during this period could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Treatment of Diana Rwigara’s Supporters After the August 2017 Electoral Period
For information on the treatment by authorities of Diane Rwigara’s supporters between September 2017 and March 2019, see Response to Information Request RWA106263 of April 2019.

According to the German magazine Der Spiegel, Diane Rwigara's supporters no longer dare mention their support for her in public (Der Spiegel 29 Apr. 2019). Further and corroborating information on the treatment by authorities of Diane Rwigara’s supporters after the August 2017 elections could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, the following information on the treatment of President Kagamé’s opponents in general may be useful.

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an assistant professor at the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies who has conducted research in Rwanda, notably on the impacts of violence on women’s political mobilization, explained that, generally, opponents or critics of President Kagamé avoid expressing their views in public, even in a casual setting like a café or bar, for fear of being overheard by intelligence services or government informants (Assistant Professor 25 Apr. 2019). Similarly, in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an associate professor of development at the University of Ottawa’s School of International Development and Global Studies working on issues of governance in Rwanda indicated that the Rwandan government’s control apparatus is very developed, encompassing local forms of surveillance as well as informants in local governance structures (Associate Professor 2 May 2019). Similarly, in its Freedom in the World 2019 report, Freedom House states that “[t]he authorities reportedly use informants to infiltrate civil society, further discouraging citizens from expressing dissent” (Freedom House 29 Jan. 2019, sec. D4). According to the US Department of State’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018, laws prohibiting “divisionism, genocide ideology, and genocide denial” were broadly applied by the Rwandan government, including to silence political dissent and those critical of the government (US 13 Mar. 2019, 14). The Associate Professor added that the government has instituted a [translation] “legal control apparatus” such that accusations of “denial or criticism [of the official version] of the genocide” are often levelled against political opponents who may be imprisoned as a result (Associate Professor 2 May 2019). An article in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), commenting on the treatment of certain opposition figures in Rwanda, also reports that the authorities used genocide denial charges to “silence … opponents” (WSJ 31 Oct. 2017).
According to the Associate Professor, those openly critical of the government or opposing the government and who hold [translation] “locally important” positions (for example, a local prominent citizen or teacher) are especially at risk of being targeted by these forms of surveillance and control and of being threatened, arrested or physically injured (Associate Professor 2 May 2019).

The Assistant Professor indicated that “even low members [of opposition parties] who try to run, for instance, in local elections,” as well as supporters of those opposition parties, risk being harassed by law enforcement, or arrested, and face risks of “disappearance, even murders” (Assistant Professor 25 Apr. 2019). According to the Assistant Professor, the consequences can also be material, such as confiscation of property by the government or expropriation (Assistant Professor 25 Apr. 2019). Similarly, the *Wall Street Journal* cites an exiled Rwandan economist as stating that the authorities have proceeded with “‘arbitrary’ seizures of businesses and properties based on accusations of financial crimes, such as tax evasion or fraud (*WSJ* 31 Oct. 2017).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

**References**

Assistant Professor, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. 25 April 2019. Telephone interview with the Research Directorate.

Associate Professor, School of International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa. 2 May 2019. Telephone interview with the Research Directorate.


Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** assistant professor in international development and global studies; associate professor in peace and conflict studies.

**Internet sites, including:** AfricaNews; Amnesty International; Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; BBC; EU – European Asylum Support Office; Factiva; France – Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides; Human Rights Watch; Le Monde; Radio France internationale.

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