

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Rwanda: Respect freedom of expression and end arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances**

#### ***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Rwanda***

Amnesty International welcomes Rwanda's support of the majority of recommendations made during the review, in particular all the recommendations to protect and respect freedom of expression, including by reviewing and revising existing legislation.

In this respect, the organization urges Rwanda to publicly announce a timeframe for revising the genocide ideology law as well as for the consideration of amendments to the media law by Parliament. It also strongly encourages Rwanda to review related laws and amend the sectarianism law in line with international standards.

Amnesty International is concerned that despite Rwanda's recognition of the shortcomings of the genocide ideology law, the authorities continue to use it to prosecute government critics, including journalists. It urges Rwanda to ensure that legislative changes are accompanied by prompt reviews of past cases - including of opposition politicians and journalists convicted to lengthy prison sentences for merely expressing their opinions without advocating violence.

Amnesty International also urges Rwanda to uphold its commitment to undertake credible investigations into reports of harassment of journalists and to prosecute where the evidence warrants. Rwanda could demonstrate this commitment by re-opening investigations into the killing of journalist Jean-Léonard Rugambage on 24 June 2010 and by following all leads.

Abductions, enforced disappearances and incommunicado detention - rare in Rwanda in recent years - increased in 2010 as the authorities investigated a spate of grenade attacks. Amnesty International deeply regrets Rwanda's rejection of the recommendation to investigate cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, and enforced disappearances. Rwanda states that it intends to ratify the Convention on the Protection of Enforced Disappearances, yet remains unwilling to investigate such cases.

Amnesty International urges Rwanda to determine the whereabouts and fate of any individual subjected to enforced disappearance. Anyone arbitrarily detained should be granted access to a lawyer and charged with a recognizable criminal offence, or released. Those held incommunicado should be given access to relatives and lawyers. It also calls on Rwanda to respond promptly to communications from human rights organizations and family members regarding such cases.

Amnesty International welcomes Rwanda's acceptance of recommendations to issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Procedures and urge the government to act on this without delay.

**Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Rwanda on 7 June 2011 at its 17<sup>th</sup> session.

Public Document

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW,  
UK [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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