

URGENT ACTION

INVESTIGATE MURDER OF RWANDAN JOURNALIST

Rwandan journalist Jean Leonard Rugambage was killed on 24 June. Authorities must establish an independent commission of enquiry into the killing and ensure other journalists can work in safety.

Jean Leonard Rugambage, the Deputy Editor of Rwandan newspaper, Umuvugizi, was shot dead outside his home in the Rwandan capital, Kigali on 24 June 2010. Jean Leonard Rugambage is the first Rwandan journalist murdered in recent years.

Jean Leonard Rugambage returned home around 10pm on 24 June 2010. He was shot dead as he reached the gate of his home in the Kigali suburb, Nyamirambo. His exiled Managing Editor-in-Chief, Jean-Bosco Gasasira, has stated that witnesses who heard the gunshots saw the unknown assailant drive away in a car. Police arrived at the scene soon afterwards, but Jean Leonard Rugambage was already dead.

The Rwanda Police have confirmed that Jean Leonard Rugambage body remained at Kigali's Police Hospital and would not be released for burial until a later date. Police investigations have been opened.

Jean Leonard Rugambage had been investigating the shooting of the exiled former Chief-of-Staff of the Rwandan Army, Kayumba Nyamwasa, which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 19 June 2010. Umuvugizi had published an on-line article on 24 June 2010, the day of Jean Leonard Rugambage's murder, alleging that Rwandan intelligence officials were linked to the shooting. In the days before his murder, Jean Leonard Rugambage had told colleagues that he felt that the surveillance on him had intensified.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, French or your own language:

- urging them to ensure that any autopsy of the body of Jean Leonard Rugambage is undertaken by independent medical experts;
- calling on them to establish an independent commission of enquiry into the killing of Jean Leonard Rugambage;
- demanding that they ensure that the perpetrators are brought to trial promptly and in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- urging them to make public assurances that all Rwandan journalists can work freely, independently and with full protection from state authorities.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 AUGUST 2010 TO:

President

Paul Kagame
Office of the President
BP 15
Urugwiro Village
Kigali
Rwanda
Fax: +250 572431
Salutation: Dear President Kagame

Police commissioner

Emmanuel Gasana
Commissioner General
Rwandan National Police
Kigali
Rwanda
Fax: +250 58 66 02
Salutation: Dear Commissioner
General

Prosecutor General

Martin Ngoga
National Public Prosecution Authority
BP 1328
Kigali
Rwanda
Fax: +250 589 501
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Jean Leonard Rugambage's newspaper, Umuvugizi, was suspended in April 2010 until after Rwanda's presidential elections scheduled for August 2010. The Rwandan High Media Council, a regulatory body aligned with the government, suspended Umuvugizi for six months alleging they had incited opposition to the government and divided the army. Umuseso, another private newspaper, was also banned for six months. The High Media Council later started court proceedings to initiate a permanent ban against both papers. After the suspension, Umuvugizi continued to publish on their website, launched in May, though their website was not accessible from within Rwanda.

Jean-Leonard Rugambage became the Acting Editor of Umuvugizi after the Managing Editor, Jean-Bosco Gasasira, fled Rwanda in April 2010 after threats following Umuvugizi's suspension. Jean-Bosco Gasasira had been brutally assaulted in February 2007 by unidentified men with iron bars. Prior to the attack, Jean-Bosco Gasasira, had also published several articles critical of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the ruling political party.

Over recent years, Rwandan journalists working for non-state media have frequently been threatened and physically assaulted. Criminal sanctions have also been used against them to stifle freedom of expression. There have been no known cases of Rwandan journalists murdered in Rwanda in recent years, but several journalists have fled Rwanda for their safety.

Such an attack comes, as the space for independent reporting fast diminishes before Rwanda's August 2010 presidential elections. Amnesty International has called on the Rwandan authorities to respect the rights to freedom of association and freedom of expression and to ensure that journalists can work freely, independently and with protection from state authorities.

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