

**RWANDA:
ALLOW CRITICISM TO
BE VOICED**

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Freedom of expression in Rwanda has been unduly restricted for many years. The months leading up to the August 2010 presidential elections, which President Paul Kagame won with 93 per cent of the vote, were marked by a clampdown on freedom of expression and of association.

Vague and sweeping laws on “divisionism” and “genocide ideology” were introduced in Rwanda in the decade after the 1994 genocide, in which up to 800,000 Rwandans were killed. The laws prohibit hate speech, but are broadly drafted so that they criminalize expression that does not amount to hate speech, including legitimate criticism of the government and government policies.

The laws contravene Rwanda’s regional and international human rights obligations and commitments to freedom of expression, and the vague wording is deliberately exploited to violate human rights.

TAKE ACTION NOW

**PLEASE SIGN AND SEND THIS POSTCARD TO THE PRESIDENT OF RWANDA
(CARE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IN LONDON)**

Image: Voters queue on election day, 9 August 2010, in Kimihurura sector, Kigali. © Graham Holliday/Kigali Wire
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Dear President Kagame,

I am writing to express my dismay that critics of the government in Rwanda continue to have their voices suppressed or silenced. The Rwandan government has expressed a commitment to review laws which criminalize dissent, but recent trials of journalists and opposition politicians suggest that the restrictions placed on critics continue unabated.

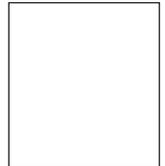
I respectfully urge you to allow opposition politicians, journalists, human rights defenders and others to express their views, including legitimate criticism of government policies, without fear for their safety.

I also urge you to accelerate the review of the “genocide ideology” law and the 2009 media law to bring them in line with Rwanda’s obligations under international human rights law.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Country: _____



**President Paul Kagame
Care of High Commissioner Ernest
Rwamucyo
Rwandan High Commission
120-122 Seymour Place
London W1H 1NR
United Kingdom**

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Image: Voters queue on election day, 9 August 2010, in Kimihurura sector, Kigali. © Graham Holliday/Kigali Wire
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