

Ingabire's kids: "Think, Mr Kagame!"



"It's easy to make," says Rémy, the eldest son (18), as he dips a piece of fish and some frozen chips in the fryer. "Sometimes, I also make pasta." Since his mother is gone, Rémy is more often in the kitchen. He is currently following a course in catering.

After dinner, Rémy and his little brother Rist (8) go sit behind their computer to play play games. Their father, Lin Muyizere sighs: "Before, when Victoire was still here, there was always people visiting us."

Victoire Ingabire



Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza (1968) is the leader of the opposition party United Democratic Forces in Rwanda. After the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, she lived for 16 years with her family in the Netherlands. Since she came back to Rwanda, she has been arrested twice. The latest accusation against her by the Rwandan government is the "creation of a terrorist organisation." She is currently in a police cell in Kigali, waiting for her trial.

In a cell

Lin's wife, Victoire Ingabire, head of the Rwandan opposition party United Democratic Forces (UDF), ran for president last summer in Rwanda. In January 2010 she returned to her homeland to prepare for the election. Instead of being able to run as a candidate, Ingabire is placed under house arrest. And since October 14 she is in a cell at a police station in Kigali.

Meanwhile, Paul Kagame, leader of the Rwandan Popular Front (RPF) is re-elected as president. And Ingabire is accused of "forming a terrorist organisation." A way to get rid of her, says her family. She runs the risk of getting a heavy sentence.

Powerless

Her husband, who lives in Zevenhuizen, a small town in the west of the Netherlands, is trying

to understand. But he feels powerless. “Everyday, we get messages that she is not doing well. She is not eating well because she is scared of being poisoned. She is weak and sleeps badly. Our life is run by all of this.”

Lin used to call his wife three times a day: morning, afternoon and evening. He says she was doing relatively well. But since she is in a police cell, he cannot talk to her directly anymore. “I miss her terribly. I want to know how she is really doing.” Now he calls her lawyer on a daily basis. Calls from friends and families wanting to know more about Ingabire’s situation pour in everyday at the lawyer’s office.

Financial aid

Their daughter Raissa (21) who lives somewhere else is visiting. She looks like her mother. Raissa has met with the Rwandan ambassador to the Netherlands: “ I want to talk to my mother, but I still I have not been told anything. They can’t let her die of hunger. I want a humane trial!”

She strongly hopes that the new Dutch government can do something about it. "Why would the Netherlands support a country where democracy is not possible?

The Netherlands must compel Rwanda to introduce democracy by stopping the financial aid. Or at least threaten to do so. Rwanda needs help. So without money, they have a problem."

Question to Kagame

Lin has a message for the Rwandan President: “I would like to tell President Kagame that Victoire did not come back to Rwanda to make war or to be his enemy. Everybody wants freedom, not only Victoire. Everyone in Africa wants it, isn’t it?”

Raissa would like to ask Kagame to reflect on the situation: “My mother wants reconciliation to happen. She wants freedom for the people in their own country. If Kagame reflects on this, the situation can change, I think. Or at least I hope...”