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Kigali -Rwanda

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*"Pour un Etat de Droit, la Democratie et l'Egalité de chances" ; "For the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity"*

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**Kigali 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

**Press release**

**Re: Peter Erlinder, a human rights and freedom icon, finally free from the Rwandan jailer.**

We are very pleased that an innocent person, who has committed himself for the defence of human rights and due process of law at the expense of his own life, is released from the inhumane conditions of a Rwandan jail. This is a result of relentless pressure on the regime. We are impressed by the struggle of his family, ordinary citizens, friends, scholars, colleagues, civil associations, journalists, human rights bodies, congressmen and senators for the work they did around the clock. We wish to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to his family for courageously bearing this ordeal and doing everything possible to bring the matter to the attention of the US Government and the United Nations.

It is an open secret that his arrest was against all norms of judicial process. He cannot be held responsible for his expressed or written views in the defence of his clients. Once again the Rwandan judicial system has clearly demonstrated what the world has failed to believe for a long time namely that there is no rule of law in Rwanda.

The UN and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) have established that the arrest and subsequent detention of Peter Erlinder were in violation of his immunity from legal process at the International Criminal

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Tribunal for Rwanda where he is a lead defence council. This is raising up again serious questions on the capacity of the current regime to deal with ICTR cases or to provide fair justice to many Rwandan suspects held in different countries.

The arrest of Professor Peter Erlinder, a citizen of the United States whose government is a major ally of the Government of Rwanda and a person whose professional rights and credentials are covered by international conventions, clearly shows how difficult if not impossible for a Rwandan to get justice in Rwanda. This is particularly difficult for any person challenging politically President Paul Kagame. The arrest of my lawyer is also deterrent against anyone who tries to defend my case.

The contradicting declarations of the government, the chief prosecutor and the police during the detention of Peter Erlinder have also highlighted how justice is done in Rwanda: fabrication of proof, intrigue, manipulative tactics and unfairness.

We are appealing to the voices that have stood for Professor Peter Erlinder to continue to be on the side of Rwandans that Peter Erlinder has been standing and fighting for in order to get to the root causes of the Rwandan crisis.

Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza  
FDU – Inkingi, Chair.