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**United Democratic Forces**

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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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06<sup>th</sup> July 2010

PRESS RELEASE

VICTIMS OF “THE WAR ON THE OPPOSITION” ARE POLITICAL PRISONERS.

Opposition leaders arrested on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2010 in the operation “war on the opposition” were paraded in a Rwandan court today. It was an opportunity for both their families and the population to know the charges levelled by the regime’s judiciary: criminal association by responding to calls for protest against the government; and threat to national security because of participation in illegal protest. The reality is that Rwandans don’t have right to peaceful demonstration thanks to harsh anti-democracy and anti-protest laws tailored by the regime in order to remain in power. The government has just confirmed that the victims are nothing else than prisoners of conscience.

They have been locked up for speaking out with non-violent means against the dictatorship. The schism between the government and the population is pushing the country to a brink of chaos: jail, torture, summary executions and a set of repressive laws are common for those branded as enemies opposed to the diktat of the ruling party. Rwandans have only one choice: follow or suffer.

A de facto definition of a political prisoner is provided by the human rights organization Amnesty International: "Any prisoner whose case has a significant political element: whether the motivation of the prisoner's acts, the acts themselves, or the motivation of the authorities." The repression and torture of members of the opposition is justified by anti-protest laws protecting the ruling party and its leader Paul Kagame. According to the incumbent (press conference, Kigali, 29th June 2010), critics are only “a barking dog while the worriless train is speeding up”. The arrest of peaceful demonstrators is not only an infringement of the Rwandan Constitution but an open violation of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights ratified by every country in 1948, meaning that political, religious and cultural freedoms are supposed to be upheld by every country’s laws. However, political prisoners continue to be taken every day, with alarmingly large numbers of these arrests being legalized by various anti-terrorism, anti-protest, anti-genocide, divisionism and political party laws.

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We call upon the government of Paul Kagame not to disregard the political status of those prisoners of conscience i.e. opposition leaders Sylvain Sibomana (FDU Secretary General), Ms. Alice Muhirwa (FDU Treasurer), Theoneste Sibomana (FDU Kigali), Martin Ntavuka (FDU Nyarugenge) and Bernard Ntaganda (PSI Chair), Jean Baptiste Icyitonderwa, Theobald Mutarambirwa, Sylvere Mwizerwa of PS Imberakuri. The scandalous incarceration of the lawyer Theogene Muhayeyezu mirrors the real face of a leadership oppressing lawyers because of non-violent political views of their clients. All those innocent people should go back home without any further delay.

Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza  
FDU INKINGI  
Chair.

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