

Kagame Cracks Down Hard in Rwanda, Victoire Ingabire in Danger

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Featured image: Victoire Ingabire (Source: [Friends of Victoire](#))

I spoke to Joseph Bukeye, an officer of Victoire Ingabire's FDU-Inkingi party in Brussels, Belgium.

Ann Garrison: What danger is Victoire Ingabire facing now in her seventh year in prison?

Joseph Bukeye: Starvation. She requires a special diet which has been provided by our staff since her arrest. Two people have been authorized to see her, but they have both been arrested. No one else is allowed to see her.

AG: And what's your source of information about this?

JB: Her lawyer and our own sources.

AG: Five more members of your party, FDU-Inkingi, have been arrested in Kigali, as has at least one member of another opposition party. Do you have any word of them?

JB: A total of 10 members of our party have been arrested plus one from our sister party PDP-Imanzi. Three of ours, the driver, the security guard, and the house worker, were set free yesterday. Family members were denied access to the seven still detained. Our lawyer managed to see two of them today.

AG: Diane Rwigara, the woman who attempted to challenge Paul Kagame for the presidency this year, has also been arrested, so this seems to be part of a wider crackdown on any opposition. Do you have any idea why it is happening now?

JB: It is indeed a well orchestrated campaign to uproot the opposition. Kagame has just managed to get himself "re-elected," and he doesn't want any dissenting voices from any corner. He is facing growing dissent within his own party and he does not want to have to face the opposition parties on another front. He does not care whether the opposition is Hutu or Tutsi; he just wants to stifle it. His relations with neighbours are souring, and his plan to oust Burundi's leadership has failed. He fears retaliation.

AG: Do you know when the regional African Court of Human and People's Rights might rule on Victoire's appeal of her sentence in Rwanda?

JB: Very soon. Probably during the ongoing session of the court. Kagame no doubt sees that

coming soon and feels more embattled. The court has no enforcement authority, but a ruling in Victoire's favor will further damage his image.

AG: What can anyone do to help Victoire and the other opposition leaders in prison or detention?

JB: People can attempt to turn press attention to the situation and ask their governments to demand that the prisoners are all given due process, The US and the UK are the top donors to Rwanda, so it is especially important to contact them. Ask them to demand due process, fair trials, and access to subsistence commodities for the prisoners as long as they are detained. They can also object to the West's double standard regarding Rwanda and Burundi. Western governments, with the help of the UN Human Rights Council, are pushing for an ICC indictment of Burundian officials, when the human rights abuse in Rwanda is much worse.

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