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CALL FOR AN IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF PROF. PETER ERLINDER BY RWANDAN AUTHORITIES

It is with deep consternation and sadness that our organization has learned the imprisonment of Prof. Peter Erlinder by Kagame's regime. He has been arrested and charged of harboring "genocide ideology". While Prof. Peter Erlinder has devoted most of his career in defending the defenseless human beings, his generosity and convictions that all men and women have the inherent rights to enjoy the basic fundamental freedoms are boundless. Prof. Erlinder was in the country to serve as a defense counsel in the case opposing one of the opposition leaders who has been virtually under house arrest to the Rwandan regime.

The arrest and sequestration of Prof. Erlinder are symptomatic of the on-going persecution, harassment, and/or imprisonment of ordinary Rwandans in general and political opposition leaders in particular who dare to use their constitutional rights to challenge the status-quo. Such denial of the basic fundamental rights and freedoms to Rwandan citizens has been the whole mark of Kagame's regime and his cronies. However, the Prof. Erlinder's arrest marks a new level in which Kagame's government will do anything to impose its hegemonic rule.

The RUD-RPR coalition calls for an immediate and unconditional release of Prof. Peter Erlinder. In addition, he should be allowed if he so chooses to assist his client unhindered. Our organization remains strongly convinced that the charges against Prof. Erlinder are groundless, politically motivated, and therefore should not be allowed to stand.

We would like to call upon the Rwandan authorities to also release all political prisoners, prisoners of opinion and conscience that are or have been languishing in Kagame's prisons. Like in any other democratic societies, Rwandan citizens and friends of Rwanda shall enjoy their basic fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by law without being subjected to unlawful restrictions put in place by a dictatorial regime. It is time to remind Kagame and his cronies that the persecution of political opponents and ordinary citizens is neither tolerable nor acceptable as a system of governance.

Once again, our organizations would like to call upon the International Community to witness the repression perpetrated by the Kagame's regime and ask the latter to take appropriate actions in denouncing and isolating Kagame and his cronies.

As our coalition has always pointed out, the Rwandan problem is political in nature and requires political solutions. It is time to tackle the Rwandan enigma and genuinely find lasting solutions to the overall problem of our homeland. Therefore, it is important that the root causes of the political instability be resolved. It is our firm conviction that as long as the underlying causes of the Rwandan political problems would not genuinely be addressed, our homeland and the region as a whole will neither enjoy lasting peace nor sustainable development and prosperity.

In order to foster a reconciliatory Justice system, the only foundation of genuine Reconciliation, the coalition RUD-Urunana and RPR will continue to call for the organization, under the auspices of the International Community, of an Inter-Rwandan Dialogue. In addition, such process would set up a "Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation" Commission that would help heal a traumatized society.

We remain convinced that only this Dialogue would lead to lasting peace, stability, and the establishment of new political, judiciary, and security institutions that would meet the legitimate aspirations of all the constitutive groups of the Rwandan society. Rud-Urunana and RPR have vied to accompany the Rwandan people in this long and enduring process.

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