

## **RUD-URUNANA**

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### **PRESS RELEASE PP No. 02/SEPT./09**

#### **RWANDA'S PRESIDENT RECIPIENT OF 2009 CGC AWARD: AN OTHER BLOW TO THE PEOPLE OF THE AFRICA GREAT LAKES REGION**

The Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUD-Urunana) has learned that Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, has been honored with one of the Clinton Global Citizen Awards. Such awards are given to outstanding individuals for their leadership in improving the lives of their fellow human beings.

Our organization praises and welcomes the remarkable work accomplished by the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) around the world in general and in Central Africa in particular. CGI actions to eradicate diseases such as Malaria and advocating for HIV/AIDS victims, providing safe drinking water to the poor are to be strongly commended and supported. However, honoring Paul Kagame has made a lot of rwandans wonder how CGI is really committed to the advancement of good governance and to fostering strong democratic institutions without which CGI stated goals will never be sustainable in countries like Rwanda.

Contrary to what was stated in the CGC brief, Paul Kagame was not elected in 2000. While assuming the vice-presidency, he did everything possible to undermine the authority of the then President Pasteur Bizimungu who was subsequently pushed aside to let the office of the President in the hands of Paul Kagame. When subsequently Pasteur Bizimungu and his friends tried to set up an independent political party, Kagame threw them in prison where they languished for several years. Due to his health, the former president was released from prison and sent home where he is under constant persecution and invasive surveillance; he is practically under house arrest. Meanwhile, Bizimungu's companions are still serving harsh prison sentences for having had the courage to challenge Paul Kagame and his cronies.

Despite the image projected by Paul Kagame and his regime supporters, fifteen years after the rwandan tragedy and the ongoing situation in the Eastern Congo (DRC), reliable information has come to light painting Kagame as one of the most notorious criminals the world has ever known. After several years of painstaking investigations, two independent judges have come to the conclusion that it was Paul Kagame who gave the order to gun down the presidential jet on April 6, 1994 killing two african presidents, Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi, their respective aides and the jet crew. It is this terrorist act that sparked one of the horrendous human tragedies the world has ever known. It is important to remind CGI selection panelists that Paul Kagame and forty officers among his top and closest military commanders have been indicted by a spanish judge for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed both in Rwanda as well as in the DRC. Paul Kagame's regime has invaded DRC several times and current estimates provided by human rights organizations have estimated the death toll to at least four millions of congolese citizens and rwandan refugees. It is not understandable that CGI would honor an individual who has been the main architect of such loss

of lives; unless, we are brought to believe that the lives of some human beings are more important than others.

The economic progress trumpeted by the rwandan regime supporters is more a mirage than real and substantial progress. Reliable information from the country paints a very dark picture of the rwandan society of today. In rural areas, hunger has become endemic due to ill-thought policies. The human rights situation is desperate. While the regime tries to justify the repressive measures by which it governs, the great majority of rwandan citizens does not and can not enjoy its basic fundamental rights and freedoms such as the freedom of speech, the freedom of association, and the right to lawful dissent. The freedom of press is inexistent and/or forcefully repressed. Above all, rwandans are not equal before the law. This dire situation has been denounced by several impartial observers and independent organizations including the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative that recently recommended that Rwanda's application to join the Commonwealth should be rejected.

While supporting CGI mission statements to help the poor and the needy around the globe, our organization strongly deplores CGI honoring Paul Kagame among its award recipients and hope that it would be reconsidered. By giving such outstanding award to a dictator that has brought death and suffering to millions of people in central Africa, it has dashed in the eyes of the great majority of people of central Africa all hope to see CGI genuinely fulfill its goodwill missions around the world. It is our firm conviction that instead of honoring Paul Kagame, CGI should help all rwandans irrespective of their respective backgrounds to engage in a constructive Dialogue that would foster genuine reconciliation and an impartial justice. Such process would ultimately lead to lasting peace and development that would benefit all the people of the Great Lakes region.

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