

Rwanda

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Recent Developments

The Supreme Court ruled in June 2025 that Article 39 of the Cybercrime Law is compatible with the country's Constitution, particularly provisions on freedom of expression and access to information. The petitioner, a prominent Rwandan lawyer, argued that Article 39 unreasonably curtailed citizens' freedom to express opinions, especially in digital spaces, and that it risked being used to suppress dissent and journalism under the guise of fighting misinformation. Please see the Barriers to Expression section below in this report for additional details.

While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

Introduction

Civil society in Rwanda comprises a diverse range of national and international organizations that contribute to the country's socioeconomic advancement.

The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) maintains near-total control over political life in Rwanda, leaving limited space for independent civic engagement. Civil society operates within a tightly regulated environment where collaboration with government priorities is not only expected but often enforced. This dynamic, coupled with restrictive laws and oversight practices, has constrained the sector's autonomy and effectiveness.

While the Constitution guarantees the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, in practice, implementation of these rights is undermined by vague legal provisions, burdensome registration and reporting requirements, and restrictive oversight. Civil society organizations must align their activities with government development priorities and secure formal collaboration agreements with district authorities, which can be used to deny registration or restrict operations. Public gatherings and demonstrations require advance notification or authorization, with failure to comply subject to severe criminal penalties, even in the absence of violence or disruption. In addition, individuals expressing dissenting views—particularly those in political opposition—have faced harassment, prosecution, or imprisonment.

This Civic Freedom Monitor (CFM) country note was made possible through the research conducted by Joseph Kasongo.

Civic Freedoms at a Glance

Organizational Forms	National and International NGOs
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Registration Body	<p>Domestic NGOs have two-tiered registration process with a) collaboration letter of the District issued by the mayor of the District and b) Action Plan of the fiscal year and authenticated statute needed for an application to the CEO of the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB). The RGB allows only 6 months for the receipt of provisional permit from local authority (collaboration letter from the District). There are also excessive documentation requirements.</p> <p>The RGB was formed from merging the Rwanda Governance Advisory Council (RGAC) and the National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat (NDIS). It is a public agency with legal personality and administrative and financial autonomy, and is established by Law no. 56/2016 of 16/12/2016 establishing the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) and determining its mission, organization and functioning.</p>
Approximate Number	<p>2085 Registered National Non-Governmental Organizations 206 Registered International Non-Governmental Organizations 576 Registered Faith-Based Organizations 11 Registered political organizations 5 Registered Foundations <i>(The above is based on Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) statistics from June 2021)</i></p>
Barriers to Formation	<p>Domestic NGOs: (1) two-tiered registration process with action plan presented to local authority and application to the CEO of the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB); (2) lengthy registration process, with application to Ministry allowed only 6 months after receipt of provisional permit from local authority; and (3) additional documents may be requested when applying for registration.</p> <p>Foreign NGOs: Detailed documentation requirements at the time of registration.</p>
Barriers to Operations	<p>Ministry approval required for decisions relating to NGOs' statutes and for NGOs' legal representatives and their assistants.</p> <p>Administrative expenses are limited to 30% of the NGO's overall budget.</p> <p>NGOs must incorporate governmental priorities into their mission.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding and performance contract is needed with the District where activities are carried out.</p>
Barriers to Resources	No legal barriers.
Barriers to Expression	No legal barriers, assuming an organization's compliance with constitutional boundaries. However, human rights activists have argued that restrictions on freedom of speech in Rwanda persist. While a growing number of social media, televisions, and radio stations broadcast programs expressing critical views of the government, pro-government views still dominate domestic media.
Barriers to Assembly	Five days advance notification requirement; excessive criminal and financial penalties for violations, especially for assemblies held on public roadways.

Legal Overview

This section provides a brief overview of Rwanda's legal framework for the promotion and protection of civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1975
Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)	No
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1975
Optional Protocol to ICESCR (Op-ICESCR)	No
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (ILO No. 87)	1988
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1975
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1981
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	No
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1989
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)	No
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	2008
Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide	2008

Key Regional Agreements	Ratification
African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights	2003
Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region	2006
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	2012

* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda was adopted by referendum in May 2003 and revised through referendum several times, most recently in 2015.

Relevant constitutional provisions include:

Article 37: Freedom of Conscience and Religion

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, worship and public manifestation thereof is guaranteed by the

State in accordance with the law. Propagation of ethnic, regional, racial discrimination or any other form of division is punished by law.

Article 38: Freedom of Press, of Expression and of Access to Information

Freedom of press Freedom of press, of expression and of access to information are recognized and guaranteed by the State.

Freedom of expression and freedom of access to information shall not prejudice public order, good morals, the protection of the youth and children, the right of every citizen to honor and dignity and protection of personal and family privacy.

Article 39: Right to Freedom of Association

The right to freedom of association is guaranteed and does not require prior authorization. This right is exercised under conditions determined by law.

Article 40: Right to Freedom of Assembly

The right to freedom of peaceful and unarmed assembly is guaranteed. This right is exercised in accordance with the law. This right does not require prior authorization, except when provided for by the law.

NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Relevant national-level laws and regulations affecting civil society include:

- Organic Law 55/2008 of 10/09/2008 Governing Non-Governmental Organizations;
- Law Number 04/2012 of 17/02/2012 Governing the Organization and Functioning of National Non-Governmental Organizations;
- Law Number 05/2012 of 17/02/2012 Governing the Organization and Functioning of International Non-Governmental Organizations;
- Law Number 06/2012 of 17/02/2012 Governing the Organization and Functioning of Religious-Based Organizations;
- Ministerial order N° 001/07.01 OF 14/01/2013 Determining Additional Requirements for the Registration of Religious-based Organizations;
- Organic Law N° 10/2013/OL of 11/07/2013 Governing Political Organizations and Politicians;
- Law N° 47/2012 of 14/01/2013 relating to the Regulation and Inspection of Food and Pharmaceutical Products;
- Law N° 37/2012 of 09/11/2012 establishing the Value Added Tax (especially in Article 6 Paragraph 2 and other regulations);
- Law N° 72/2018 of 31/08/2018 determining the organization and functioning of faith-based organizations;
- Organic Law N° 005/2018 of 30/08/2018 modifying organic law N° 10/2013/ol. of 11/07/2013 governing political organizations and politicians;
- Regulations of Rwanda Governance Board N° 001 of 08/03/2019 governing faith-based

organizations;

- Law N° 2/2013 on Regulating Media in Rwanda;
- Law N° 4/2013 of 08/02/2013 Relating to Access to Information; and
- Law Governing Foundations No 059/2021 OF 14/10/2021.

PENDING REGULATORY INITIATIVES

A draft law to further regulate NGOs in Rwanda passed a first reading in parliament in April 2024. Civil society is concerned that the legislation will limit civic space in a country where the government has a record of stifling dissent and press freedoms. The draft law received 45 votes in a parliament that is heavily controlled by President Paul Kagame's ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front, and not a single vote was cast against it. The draft law subsequently moved to the lower chamber of the Parliament's Committee on Social Affairs for further scrutiny. The draft legislation, if passed, would:

- require NGOs to submit their operating plans and budgets to the authorities for approval;
- provide regulators with the power to interfere in the day-to-day management of NGOs, including firing staff; and
- mandate that NGOs not exceed 20% of their operating budget in programs that are deemed to be not in the interest of their beneficiaries.

Please help keep us informed; if you are aware of pending initiatives, write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

Legal Analysis

This section provides an in-depth assessment of Rwanda's legal environment for civic freedoms, including the barriers to the exercise of the freedoms of association (formation, operations, resources), expression, and peaceful assembly. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

The Organic Law Governing Non-Governmental Organizations (Law 55/2008 of October 9, 2008) defines non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as associations composed of natural persons or autonomous, voluntary collective organizations that aim to improve economic, social, and cultural development or advocate for the interests of specific groups, individuals, or the broader public. To operationalize this framework, three implementing laws were enacted in 2012, each governing a distinct organizational form:

- National NGOs;
- International NGOs operating in Rwanda; and
- Religious-based organizations.

Law No. 4/2012, which regulates national NGOs, recognizes three categories of national NGOs: public interest organizations, common interest organizations, and foundations (Article 3).

Both national and international NGOs are required to register and obtain legal personality in order to

operate legally within the country.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATUS

Rwandan law does not provide for a distinct “public benefit” status separate from the categories defined under the national NGO framework. However, once a national NGO has acquired legal personality—regardless of its classification—it enjoys tax exemptions and other benefits, in accordance with relevant legislation (Article 28). Additionally, NGOs that have signed memoranda of understanding with the Ministry of Health and the Government of Rwanda are eligible for exemptions on health commodities taxes.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Rwandan Constitution guarantees the right and duty of all citizens to engage in the development and protection of the nation. Article 48 affirms that every Rwandan should participate in the development and defense of the country by safeguarding peace, democracy, equality, and social justice. Article 11 encourages the use of “homegrown initiatives” rooted in Rwandan values as a means to foster national unity and restore dignity.

Law No. 4/2012 affirms the role of NGOs in civic life, granting them the right to contribute to national policy-making and legislative processes. Specifically, Article 28 states that NGOs may propose views on policies and laws, advocate for human rights and other national values, and express opinions on matters of public concern.

Several state-sanctioned mechanisms are designed to facilitate citizen participation. The National *Umushyikirano* Council (Article 140 of the Constitution), commonly referred to as the National Dialogue Council, convenes annually to bring together the President and citizen representatives to discuss issues of public importance. However, some NGOs find the Council to be less effective for advocacy due to its large scale and limited duration (typically two days).

One of the most prominent “homegrown initiatives” is *Ubudehe*, a traditional practice of collective problem-solving and mutual support providing a participatory development approach to poverty reduction. Another key structure is the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF), established under Prime Minister’s Instructions No. 003/03 of 03/07/2015. JADF operates at both district and community levels, serving as a platform for coordination among stakeholders, including CSOs.

Efforts have been made to ensure inclusive participation, particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Women hold the majority of seats in Rwanda’s Parliament, supported by a constitutional quota guaranteeing at least 30 percent representation. People with disabilities are represented in Parliament and benefit from support from the government and civil society. Youth (ages 16 and 30 years of age), who constitute the majority of the Rwandan population, are supported through institutional mechanisms such as the National Youth Council and National Women’s Council.

Law No. 44 of September 6, 2017, provides protection for whistleblowers. Article 3 empowers individuals to report misconduct by government officials and private institutions. Article 9 requires the state to ensure whistleblowers’ security. Article 12 provides that if a whistleblower is summoned to court, his or her identity must not be disclosed, and if subject to interrogation, the procedure must be held on camera and without cross-examination.

BARRIERS TO FORMATION

Article 17 of Law No. 04/2012 provides that national NGOs must first obtain a temporary certificate of registration, which is valid for twelve months. Within nine months of receiving this certification, the NGO must apply for legal personality in order to operate on a permanent basis.

According to implementing regulations issued by the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), the application for legal personality must include the following:

1. Application letter addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of the RGB;
2. Authenticated statutes that comply with the provisions of Law No. 04/2012;
3. Documentation verifying the location and full address of the organization's head office;
4. Names, duties, contact details, curricula vitae, and judicial records of the organization's legal representative and their deputy;
5. Minutes of the general assembly meeting that appointed the legal representative, including signatures of all members present;
6. Action plan for the fiscal year; and
7. Original District Collaboration Letter.

International NGOs must meet a similarly detailed set of requirements. These include an implementation schedule and its various stages of planning, detailed cost estimates supported by data, information on the sustainability of activities after the NGO's departure, and "all information relating to its geographical establishment throughout the world."

BARRIERS TO OPERATIONS

National NGOs may be denied registration or may face termination if they fail to comply with applicable laws or there is "convincing evidence that the [applicant] may jeopardize security, public order, health, morals, and human rights" (Articles 20 and 24 of Law No. 4/2012).

NGOs must sign a memorandum of understanding (also known as an Original District Collaboration Letter) and a performance contract with the local district authorities where they operate. These agreements ensure that NGO activities are consistent with district-level priorities. NGOs with projects that do not align with these priorities may be denied registration.

Following registration, all NGOs are required to become members of the [Joint Action Development Forum \(JDAF\)](#), a coordination platform that aligns NGO activities with district development plans.

The Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) monitors the governance and service delivery of both domestic and international NGOs. NGOs are required to submit annual reports that include updated action plans, budget estimates, and in the case of international NGOs, details about expatriate staff following the completion of their assignments.

Furthermore, international NGOs are subject to financial restrictions: their administrative expenses must not exceed 20 percent of the total budget for programs that are not in the interest of their beneficiaries (Article 18.4).

There are no legal restrictions on international communication or engagement with foreign partners.

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Foreign Funding

NGOs are not subject to legal restrictions on the receipt of foreign funding.

Domestic Funding

NGOs are allowed to engage in income-generating activities, provided that all profits are used to support activities related to their primary objectives.

NGOs may also compete for government funding and, in some cases, are encouraged to do so. The government is required to allocate funding for NGOs in the national budget, in addition to providing support through line ministries and contractual agreements. In practice, however, access to government funding is often tied to alignment with government priorities, and NGOs that receive state funds do not have total independence from the government.

While NGOs benefit from tax exemptions on most categories of income, Rwanda's tax law does not provide incentives for private or corporate donors who contribute to NGOs.

BARRIERS TO EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression is constitutionally protected in Rwanda. Article 37 of the Constitution states:

Freedom of press, of expression and of access to information are recognised and guaranteed by the State. Freedom of expression and freedom of access to information shall not prejudice public order, good morals, the protection of the youth and children, the right of every citizen to honour and dignity and protection of personal and family privacy.

Despite this constitutional guarantee, significant restrictions on freedom of speech and political space persist in practice. A notable example is the case of Victoire Ingabire, who returned to Rwanda in 2010 from exile in the Netherlands to run for president. Shortly after her return, she was arrested and sentenced by the Rwandan Supreme Court to 15 years in prison in what was widely regarded as a politically motivated trial. The African Court on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) ruled in her favor, finding that Rwanda had violated her rights to freedom of expression and to an adequate legal defense. Ingabire was eventually released in 2018 through a presidential amnesty, after serving eight years in prison, five of which she spent in solitary confinement. Nonetheless, after her release, members of her political party were harassed, threatened, and arrested, or killed in suspicious circumstances. Journalists using YouTube have also been targeted for prosecution for not registering with the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC) or for publishing information that contradicts the government's version of certain events, such as the suspicious death in custody in 2020 of Kizito Mihigo, a gospel singer and activist.

In addition, the Supreme Court ruled in June 2025 that Article 39 of the Cybercrime Law is compatible with the country's Constitution, particularly provisions on freedom of expression and access to information. The petitioner, Me Jean Paul Ibambe, a prominent Rwandan lawyer, filed the case arguing that Article 39 unreasonably curtailed citizens' freedom to express opinions, especially in digital spaces, and that it risked being used to suppress dissent and journalism under the guise of fighting misinformation. Article 39 states that: "Any person who, knowingly and through a computer or a computer system, publishes rumors that may incite fear, insurrection or violence amongst the population or that may make a person lose their credibility, commits an offence. Upon conviction, he/she is liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than three (3) years and not more than five (5) years and a fine of not less than one million Rwandan francs (FRW 1,000,000) and not more than three million Rwandan francs (FRW 3,000,000)."

While a growing number of media outlets—including social media platforms, television, and radio stations—broadcast programs expressing critical views of the government, pro-government narratives still dominate the domestic media landscape.

BARRIERS TO ASSEMBLY

Article 36 of the Rwandan Constitution guarantees the freedom of assembly, stating that:

Freedom of peaceful assembly without arms is guaranteed if it is not inconsistent with the law. Prior authorization shall only be necessary if the law so requires and solely in the case of assembly in the open air, in a public place or on a public road, to the extent that such is necessary in the interests of public safety, public health or public order.

However, in practice, the legal framework imposes significant administrative and criminal restrictions on the exercise of this right, particularly for political actors.

Organic Law. No. 10/2013/OL of November 7, 2013, which governs political organizations and politicians, requires advance notice or authorization for public assemblies and demonstrations:

- Article 19 mandates that political organizations notify relevant administrative authorities at least five working days before holding a public meeting.
- Article 20 requires political organizations to both notify and obtain authorization from administrative authorities at least five working days before holding demonstrations.

The law defines a political organization as an association of citizens united by common views on national development and social welfare, aiming to access power through democratic and peaceful means.

Further restrictions are found in Article 685 of the Penal Code, which imposes potentially disproportionate penalties for violations based on broadly defined terms:

- Holding a public meeting or demonstration on public ways without notifying authorities is punishable by imprisonment of 8 days to 6 months and a fine of 100,000 to 1,000,000 Rwandan francs.
- Holding such an event despite refusal by the authorities increases the penalty to imprisonment of 6 months to 1 year and/or a fine of 200,000 to 3,000,000 Rwandan francs.
- If an unauthorized gathering impairs security, public order, or public health, penalties range from 6 months to 2 years imprisonment and/or a fine of 2,000,000 to 5,000,000 Rwandan francs (if held without prior notice) or 1 to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of 2,000,000 to 5,000,000 Rwandan francs (if held despite refusal).

For more information on restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly in Rwanda, please see “[Mission to Rwanda: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#)” (September 16, 2014), also available in the Reports of UN Special Rapporteurs section below.

Additional Resources

This section contains links to external reports and news reports relevant to civic freedoms. The Historical Notes section contains links to past developments which ICNL has reported on. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

GLOBAL INDEX RANKINGS

Ranking Body	Rank	Ranking Scale (best - worst possible)
UN Human Development Index	159 (2023)	1 - 193
World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	40 (2024)	1 - 142
Transparency International	43 (2024)	1 - 180
Fund for Peace Fragile States Index	46 (2024)	179 - 1
Freedom House: Freedom in the World	Status: Not Free Political Rights: 7 Civil Liberties: 14 (2025)	Free/Partly Free/Not Free 40 - 0 60 - 0

REPORTS

UN Universal Periodic Review Reports	Rwanda UPR page
Reports of UN Special Rapporteurs	Mission to Rwanda: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai (16 September 2014)
U.S. State Department	Rwanda Human Rights Report: 2024
Fund for Peace Fragile States Index Reports	Rwanda
IMF Country Reports	Rwanda and the IMF
Human Rights Watch	World Report: Rwanda 2025
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Online Library	Rwanda

NEWS

[Supreme Court Upholds Law Which Petitioners Said Violates Free Speech](#) (June 2025)

In a closely watched ruling with implications for digital freedoms and freedom of speech in Rwanda, the Supreme Court has rejected a constitutional challenge filed against Article 39 of Law N° 60/2018 of 22/8/2018 on the Prevention and Punishment of Cyber Crimes. The Supreme Court in a ruling issued June 5 declared that it is compatible with the country's Constitution, particularly with provisions on freedom of expression and access to information. The petitioner, Me Jean Paul Ibambe, a prominent Rwandan lawyer, had filed the case arguing that Article 39 unreasonably curtails citizens' freedom to express opinions, especially in digital spaces, and that it risks being used to suppress dissent and journalism under the guise of fighting misinformation.

[Kagame opponents and critics say elections in Rwanda neither free nor fair](#) (July 2024)

Paul Kagame's win in Rwanda's presidential election was widely expected, although critics say the vote was neither free nor fair. Kagame faced two opponents — Democratic Green Party Candidate Frank Habineza and independent candidate Philippe Mpayimana. Both received less than 1 percent of the vote. Other candidates, including some of Kagame's most vocal critics, were barred from running for president, including Diane Rwigara.

[Rwanda's president smashes his own election record](#) (July 2024)

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has smashed his own record by winning Monday's elections with more than 99% of the vote. The 66-year-old won the 2017 election with 98.63% of the vote, higher than the 93% he got in 2010 and the 95% in 2003. His critics say Mr Kagame's thundering majorities come as no surprise as he rules with an iron hand. However, his supporters say they point to his huge popularity, with Rwanda having achieved stability and economic growth under his rule. Mr Kagame is a former rebel commander whose forces swept to power in 1994, ending a genocide that claimed the lives of around 800,000 people in 100 days.

[Civil Society Seeks Clarity on Operating Budget Clause](#) (May 2024)

A clause in a draft law governing NGOs, which proposes that such entities must not exceed 20 per cent of their operating budget in programs that are not in the interest of their beneficiaries, should be clarified to avoid misinterpretation in enforcement, civil society has said. The emphasis on the importance of clarity was highlighted as the lower chamber of Parliament's Committee on Social Affairs started scrutinizing the draft law.

[**Rwanda Legislature Considers Strict Rules on NGOs**](#) (April 2024)

A controversial draft law governing NGOs in Rwanda passed a first reading in parliament, with critics questioning the timing of the bill shortly before elections in July. Opponents warned that the legislation, which has yet to receive final approval, will limit civic space in a country where the government is accused of crushing dissent and press freedoms. The legislation calls for NGOs to submit their operating plans and budgets to the Rwandan authorities for approval.

[**Justice Minister Calls on Civil Society to Promote Revised Constitution**](#) (September 2023)

Minister of Justice Emmanuel Ugirashebuja has urged civil society to disperse the revised constitution as a way of ensuring that it becomes widely known and thoroughly understood at the grassroots level. He made the call on September 5 during his meeting with civil society practitioners on the dissemination and analysis of the newly revised constitution. Ugirashebuja emphasized that for the country to progress, it requires a collective effort from various stakeholders, including civil society.

[**CSO Grantees Exhibition Showcases Achievements for Rwanda's development agenda**](#) (May 2023)

The Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) and the Network of International NGOs in Rwanda (NINGO) have organized a CSO grantees exhibition at Kigali Conference and Exhibition Village. The exhibition aimed at showcasing the achievements of grantees of the second phase of the Programme on Strengthening Civil Society Organizations for Responsive and Accountable Governance in Rwanda that started in 2018. The exhibition, which was the last event of the 2023 CSO week, provided an opportunity for civil society organizations (CSOs) to demonstrate their contributions to Rwanda's development agenda.

[**'Hotel Rwanda' Hero Freed from Prisons**](#) (March 2023)

Outspoken Rwandan government critic Paul Rusesabagina, whose efforts to save people during the 1994 genocide inspired the Hollywood film "Hotel Rwanda", has finally been freed from prison after more than 900 days behind bars. Rusesabagina was released away from the media glare and will return to the United States after the Kigali government commuted his 25-year sentence on terrorism charges. His detention had thrown a spotlight on Rwanda's record of crushing political dissent and free speech under President Paul Kagame.

[**RGB Meets the Network of International NGOs**](#) (November 2022)

On November 15, 2022, the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) and the Network of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) operating in Rwanda held a joint meeting during which they discussed how the latter could engage in strategic partnerships for national transformation. In her remarks, RGB CEO, Dr. Usta Kaitezi, underscored that both local and international organisations must continuously improve and create the right influence on one another.

[**Rwanda criticizes expulsion of its ambassador from Congo**](#) (October 2022)

Rwanda accused neighboring Congo of escalating tensions between the two countries after the Rwandan ambassador to Congo was given 48 hours to leave the country following rebel advances in the east. Congo believes that Rwanda is supporting the M23 rebels, who have expanded their control over the past year. In Goma, DRC, residents burned a Rwandan flag during a protest called by civil society there.

ARCHIVED NEWS

[**Blinken raises concerns on rights in Rwanda during talks with Kagame**](#) (August 2022)

[**Civil Society Open Letter to Commonwealth Heads of Government**](#) (June 2022)

[**Rwanda cracking down on YouTubers, bloggers**](#) (April 2021)

[**Civil society petitions government over some COVID-19 guidelines**](#) (September 2020)

[**Diane Shima Rwigara is Free**](#) (October 2018)

[Rwandan Opposition Leader, 2,100 Others Walk Free from Prison](#) (September 2018)

[Rwandan parliament passes law to regulate churches](#) (July 2018)

[Human Rights Commission given more responsibilities](#) (January 2018)

[International organisations urged to align activities with districts](#) (September 2017)

[Rwandan police arrest Paul Kagame critic Diane Rwigara](#) (August 2017)

[Paul Kagame re-elected president with 99% of vote in Rwanda election](#) (August 2017)

[Rwanda's exiled activist's wife charged with treason](#) (March 2017)

[Launch of Rwanda Media Barometer 2016](#) (November 2016)

[Rwanda Parliament denounces claims by the EU](#) (October 2016)

[Rwanda Required to Appear At Ingabire Court Case in Arusha](#) (June 2016)

[Civil society calls for tough measures](#) (May 2016)

[Civil society commits to fight Genocide ideology](#) (May 2016)

[Govt, civil society in joint regional integration drive](#) (March 2016)

[Jailed Rwandan opposition leader in plea to Arusha court](#) (February 2016)

[U.S. Reiterates Criticism of Kagame Bid to Extend Presidency](#) (January 2016)

[Cabinet asks President Kagame to call a referendum on Constitution](#) (November 2015)

[Rwandan Senate votes to allow third term for Kagame](#) (November 2015)

[Parliament passes new constitutional amendments](#) (October 2015)

[New Project to Strengthen Role of Civil Society](#) (September 2015)

[Rwandan Opposition Party Seeks to Block Third Term](#) (June 2015)

[Ntaganda Released from Mpanga prison](#) (June 2014)

HISTORICAL NOTES

Civil society in Rwanda has its roots in farmers' associations established in the 1950s, many of which operated under the influence of the Church. The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, in which more than 800,000 people were killed, devastated the country's social fabric. In the aftermath, CSOs played a critical role in addressing urgent humanitarian needs—supporting widows and orphans, child-headed households, and traumatized survivors. Other CSOs emerged with a focus on promoting reconciliation, good governance, and human rights.

While these organizations have made significant and lasting contributions, Rwanda continues to grapple with the long-term social impacts of the genocide, including widespread collective trauma and fragile social cohesion.

Today, Rwanda's economy is one of the fastest growing in Africa, fueled by growth in the agriculture, industry, and service sectors. The government has also committed to an ambitious climate agenda, aiming to become carbon-neutral by 2050. As part of this vision, Rwanda plans to invest \$11 billion in climate adaptation and mitigation measures by 2030.

However, the country faces significant challenges in mobilizing the private financing needed to meet

these goals. Key obstacles include high upfront capital costs, expensive borrowing terms, and stringent collateral requirements. To help attract climate finance and catalyze green investment, Rwanda launched the Rwanda Green Investment Fund at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW

<https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/rwanda>