



Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	53
Land:	Rwanda
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	"Rwanda (2006)"
Udgivet:	29. november 2006
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	29. november 2006

Rwanda (2006)

Overview

Polity:

No polity available

Political Rights:

6

Civil Liberties:

5

Status:

Not Free

Population:

8,700,000

GNI/Capita:

\$220

Life Expectancy:

44

Religious Groups:

Roman Catholic (56.5 percent), Protestant (26 percent), other (17.5 percent)

Ethnic Groups:

Hutu (84 percent), Tutsi (15 percent), Twa [Pygmy] (1 percent)

Capital:

Kigali

Additional Info:

[Freedom in the World 2005](#)

[Freedom of the Press 2005](#)

[Nations in Transit 2004](#)

[Countries at the Crossroads 2005](#)

In 2005, the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) maintained its tight control over the country's political life. A leading Hutu-dominated guerrilla group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo announced that it had laid down its arms. Traditional courts moved ahead with judging low-level alleged perpetrators of the genocide, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) examined the cases of more senior figures.

Rwanda's ethnic divide is deeply rooted. National boundaries demarcated by Belgian colonists led to often violent competition for power within the fixed borders of a modern state. Traditional and Belgian-abetted Tutsi dominance ended with a Hutu rebellion in 1959 and independence in 1962. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were killed or fled the country in recurring violence during the next decades. In 1990, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a guerrilla war to force the Hutu regime, led by General Juvenal Habyarimana, to accept power sharing and the return of Tutsi refugees.

President Habyarimana and Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira were killed in a plane crash near Kigali in April 1994. While the perpetrators of this act have never been identified, many observers believe that Hutu extremists, angered by Habyarimana's negotiation with the RPF, committed the act. The Hutus' chauvinist solution to claims for land and power by Rwanda's Tutsi minority, which constituted approximately 15 percent of the population, was to pursue the complete elimination of the Tutsi people. The ensuing genocide was well plotted, with piles of imported machetes distributed and death lists broadcast by radio, but it did not stop the RPF from successfully taking over the country.

The Hutu-dominated army and militia, along with as many as two million Hutu refugees, fled into neighboring countries, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo. International relief efforts that eased the suffering of these refugees also had the effect of allowing the retraining and rearming of large numbers of the former army and militia forces. The United Nations, which had earlier ignored specific warnings of an impending genocide in 1994, failed to prevent such activities, and the RPF took direct action, over-running the refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Nearly three million Rwandan refugees subsequently returned to Rwanda

between 1996 and 1998 and were peacefully reintegrated into society. Security has improved considerably since 1997, although isolated killings and "disappearances" continue. The government, led by the RPF, closely directs the country's political life. In 2000, President Pasteur Bizimungu resigned and was replaced by Vice President Paul Kagame, who had already been the de facto leader of the country. A new prime minister, Bernard Makuza, was appointed.

Rwanda's extended postgenocide political transition period officially ended in 2003 with the holding of national elections. The RPF's preeminent position in Rwandan political life—combined with a short campaign period, the material advantages of incumbency, and the continuing effects of the genocide that inhibit free expression of political will—ensured Kagame's victory and that of the RPF and its allies in the August presidential and September parliamentary elections. The largest opposition party, the Hutu-based Democratic Republican Movement (MDR), was declared illegal by the authorities for allegedly sowing "divisionism," a code word for the fanning of ethnic hatred. In a sign of the extent of the RPF's influence, even the MDR parliamentary delegation voted to ban the party. A new constitution that officially permits political parties to exist, under certain conditions, was unveiled in 2003.

In early 2004, a parliamentary commission issued a report criticizing a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with propagating "genocide ideology." Subsequently, under the threat of banning, these organizations significantly limited activities that involved criticism of the government and its policies. In June, Bizimungu, a Hutu who was the first president after the genocide, was sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of inciting civil disobedience, creating a criminal gang, and embezzling state funds, although Amnesty International and other independent observers questioned the fairness of the trial.

In 2004, the government of Rwanda continued to use the legacy of the 1994 genocide as grounds for limiting dialogue between Rwandans. It took several actions that had the effect of further constricting political space, including restricting NGOs. The leading opposition party remained inactive after threats to ban it. Steps were taken to reduce the backlog of legal cases resulting from the genocide.

During 2005, the RPF maintained its domination over the country's political life. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—an exiled guerrilla group thought to have about 10,000 fighters, including members of the Interahamwe blamed for the 1994 genocide—announced an end to its armed struggle. It agreed to return home and form a political party after receiving safety guarantees.

After long delays, traditional courts moved ahead with judging low-level alleged perpetrators of the genocide. Meanwhile, the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR) examined the cases of more senior figures. Continued instability in the region, including tensions with neighboring Uganda over neighboring Congo, pose considerable challenges to the country's peaceful development and provide an excuse for the RPF to closely control the country's political

development.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Citizens of Rwanda cannot change their government democratically. The 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections gave Rwandans only a limited amount of political choice.

The 2003 constitution includes provisions that give strong powers to the president, who has sole authority to appoint the prime minister and who can dissolve the National Assembly. The constitution provides for a 26-member, indirectly elected Senate in addition to an 80-member, directly elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. Senators serve eight-year terms of office, while members of the lower house serve five-year terms.

The constitution officially permits political parties to exist but only under certain conditions. Political parties closely identified with the 1994 massacres are banned, as are parties based on ethnicity or religion. The cabinet must consist of representatives from several different parties, and the largest party is not allowed to occupy more than half of the cabinet seats. The constitution also provides that the president, prime minister, and president of the lower house cannot all belong to the same party. Hutus have some representation in the government, including Prime Minister Bernard Makuza, who was from the MDR prior to its banning.

The constitution restricts political campaigning at the grassroots level. Its emphasis on "national unity" as a priority and a provision outlawing the incitement of ethnic hatred can be interpreted to limit the legitimate exercise of political pluralism. The constitution also includes a "forum" of parties that is ostensibly designed to foster communication between parties but which can also serve to control party actions. Thus, most parties function as satellites of the RPF.

The government has undertaken a number of anticorruption measures. In 2005, President Paul Kagame fired several top leaders on corruption and embezzlement charges, including the minister of agriculture and the ambassadors to France and Ethiopia and the African Union. Government institutions particularly focused on the corruption issue include the Office of the Ombudsman, the auditor-general, and the National Tender Board. Rwanda was ranked 83 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

That the RPF does not encourage a political culture of openness and debate is seen in its attitude toward the press. The media reflect the RPF's predominant role and are constrained by fear of reprisals. The 2005 annual report by Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based press watchdog group, concluded that "despite its claims to support freedom of the press, the Kagame government continues to behave like a predator." The independent national weekly Umuseso has been closely watched, harassed, and repeatedly prosecuted. Journalists censor their own writing and say that the authorities have made it clear that

certain topics cannot be discussed. As a result, newspaper coverage is heavily progovernment. Several journalists remained held in 2005 on politically inspired charges. The broadcast media are government-controlled, although a media bill passed in June 2002 paved the way for the licensing of private radio and TV stations. There are a growing number of newspapers in the country and limited, although increasing, internet access.

Religious freedom is generally respected. Clerics were among both the victims and the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide. The implication of several Catholic clerics in the genocide has complicated relations between the government and the Roman Catholic Church. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Although the constitution codifies freedom of association and assembly, in reality these rights are limited. For example, activities that the government defines as "divisive" are prohibited. In 2004, the parliament accepted the recommendations of a parliamentary commission created to investigate the existence and spread of a "genocide ideology" in Rwanda. As a result, the parliament recommended that five NGOs and several religious groups be banned and also called for action against several international NGOs operating in Rwanda. International human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, expressed serious concern that these decisions were based on overly broad interpretations of the law, vague allegations, and insubstantial research. The executive branch decided not to ban implicated organizations outright but to refer cases to the court system for prosecution. Under the threat of banning, several targeted organizations have significantly muted their formerly independent and at times critical attitude toward the RPF.

Constitutional provisions for labor rights include the right to form trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike. There are 27 registered unions under two umbrella groups. The larger group is the Central Union of Rwandan Workers, which was closely controlled by the previous regime but which now has relatively greater independence.

The judiciary has yet to establish a profile independent of the executive. However, a new series of courts has been established that are manned by trained officials, and much of the old legal code has been revised to bring it up to date and to better respect human rights. At the beginning of 2005, about 120,000 genocide suspects were incarcerated in grossly overcrowded jails; during the year, tens of thousands were released. The traditional justice system of gacaca was reinstituted in 2002; in this system, local notables preside over community trials dealing with the less serious genocide offenses, including those that had been allegedly committed by the released inmates. Some observers have expressed concern about the potential for partiality or for the application of uneven or arbitrary standards. About 700 individuals, most from the local level, have been indicted thus far, although two members of parliament have also been implicated. The investigative phase of the gacaca process is almost complete. Since the beginning of the process, more than 5,000 people suspected of being involved in the 1994 genocide have fled to neighboring Burundi and Uganda.

The ICTR, in Arusha, Tanzania, moved ahead with its work in a deliberate fashion. The tribunal is composed of international jurists and is similar to that in The Hague dealing with those accused of genocide and crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia. In 2005, several major trials involving former senior government officials proceeded. Relations between Rwanda and the court in Arusha have been very uneven in recent years, with Rwanda accusing the ICTR of incompetence and the court accusing Rwanda of refusing to cooperate in war crimes investigations involving its army. As of late 2005, the pace of ICTR adjudications had increased, with the ICTR having rendered 22 guilty verdicts and 3 acquittals.

There are increased legal protections for equal rights. A national identity card is required when Rwandans wish to move within the country, but these are issued regularly. In previous years, there were cases of government officials forcing citizens to return to the districts listed on their identity cards. Rwanda's new constitution, adopted in May 2003, requires women to occupy at least 30 percent of seats in the National Assembly and Senate. In fact, Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in national parliaments in the world, with 48.8 percent representation in the lower house. In December 2003, the Rwanda Senate elected Aloysia Cyanzaire as the first female chief justice of the Supreme Court. Women's rights to inherit land have been strengthened through legislation. Despite these improvements, ongoing de facto discrimination against women continues. Economic and social dislocation has forced women to take on many new roles, especially in the countryside.