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Human Rights and Democracy Report 2013 - Country case study: Rwanda – freedom of association and expression

In the twenty years since the genocide, Rwanda has made remarkable progress in economic and social development, including rapidly reducing levels of poverty and expanding opportunities for women and girls. However, the UK remains concerned about restrictions on civil and political rights, such as freedom of association and expression.

Parliamentary elections took place in September and were conducted in a peaceful and secure environment. There was, however, a lack of transparency around the consolidation of results, and it was not possible for observers to verify the integrity of the tabulation process and of the final results as issued. Political space for opposition parties and civil society organisations remains constrained. There is a risk that government processes around the registration and regulation of such groups compromise their independence and autonomy. Because of delays in granting registration, the Democratic Green Party was not able to participate meaningfully in the elections. In November, the opposition PDP Imanzi party was not given permission to hold a founding conference.

We are concerned by the role that the Rwandan authorities played in the change in leadership of LIPRODHOR, one of the last remaining independent human rights advocacy organisations in the country. A court case has been initiated, which the British High Commission is following closely, including by attending hearings. Rwanda adopted new media laws in March. The UK welcomes the initial application of the laws and wider steps taken to encourage greater media self-regulation, rather than by the state. But we remain concerned about Rwanda's media environment, and by the negative impact of laws about genocide ideology on legitimate dissent and debate.

We continue to monitor the situation of imprisoned political leaders and activists, such as Victoire Ingabire, Bernhard Ntuganda, Anselme Mutuyimana and Sylvain Sibomana. We are aware of allegations by their respective political parties that the sentences handed down are disproportionate and could discourage political debate.

We are monitoring allegations that the Rwandan authorities have used violence against activists and political opponents. We have raised concerns over the slow pace of investigations into the death in July of Gustave

Makonene, an employee of Transparency International Rwanda.

The UN Security Council has issued the 2013 annual report of the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The report presented evidence of Rwandan support to the M23 armed group in eastern DRC. Following the November defeat of the M23, we continue to discuss with Rwanda how it can play a stabilising role in the region, and to support implementation of the UN's Peace and Security Co-operation Framework. The UK has an ongoing dialogue with the Rwandan government on these and other issues.

This case study is part of the [2013 Human Rights and Democracy Report](#).

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