



Document #2116583

Freedom House (Author)

Freedom on the Net 2024 - Rwanda

Not Free

36

/ 100

A [Obstacles to Access](#) 13 / 25B [Limits on Content](#) 11 / 35C [Violations of User Rights](#) 12 / 40

Last Year's Score & Status

37 / 100 Not Free

Scores are based on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free). See the [research methodology](#) and [report acknowledgements](#).

Key Developments, June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024

Internet freedom declined in Rwanda during the coverage period. Progovernment trolls used harassment and manipulated content in an effort to drown out any online criticism of the government ahead of the country's tightly controlled 2024 general elections. Self-censorship remains rampant, as the government continues to imprison those who criticize it online. People serving lengthy sentences may be subjected to torture, ill-treatment, or forced disappearance.

- In the run-up to the 2024 general elections, which were scheduled for July, networks of progovernment trolls and bot accounts used text and images generated by artificial intelligence (AI) tools to manipulate discussions on social media. They typically boasted about President Paul Kagame and his government's achievements and attacked the credibility of critical voices, including journalists in exile and disqualified presidential candidates Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya and Diane Rwigara (see B5 and C7).
- Several YouTube-based journalists who were imprisoned for their critical reporting in previous years continued to serve harsh

sentences; some have been unable to receive documents or meet privately with their lawyers while in detention (see C3).

- New investigations during the coverage period revealed additional Rwandan targets affected by Pegasus, the commercial surveillance software developed by NSO Group. They included both exiled opposition figures and government officials (see C5).
- The strict data-localization provisions of Rwanda's Protection of Personal Data and Privacy Law came into force in October 2023, raising concerns that data stored in the country by internet service providers (ISPs) would be vulnerable to surveillance and interception (see C6).
- Two journalists imprisoned for publishing critical videos on their YouTube channels alleged that they had been denied sufficient food and medical care in detention. One also alleged that he was being tortured (see C7).

Political Overview

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by President Kagame, has ruled the country since it ousted forces responsible for the 1994 genocide, ending a civil war that began in 1990. While the regime has maintained stability and economic growth, it has also suppressed political dissent through pervasive surveillance, intimidation, arbitrary detention, torture, and renditions or suspected assassinations of exiled dissidents.

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections? 3 / 6

Access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Rwanda has improved significantly in recent years. The government has invested in building internet and other ICT infrastructure in order to develop a robust information economy.

The Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) reported an increase in internet penetration to 69.4 subscriptions per hundred people as of September 2023.¹ DataReportal's Digital 2024 report set the country's internet penetration rate at 34.4 percent.² Most Rwandans access the internet using smartphones. The percentage of the population that uses fixed-line broadband internet service remains marginal, at less than 1 percent as of September 2023.³

According to a joint partnership between the government and the Korea Telecom Rwanda Networks (KTRN), 99 percent of Rwanda's population

lives in areas covered by fourth-generation (4G) mobile networks.⁴ However, in 2021, the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA) found that 75 percent of the population in areas covered by a mobile broadband network did not yet use internet services.⁵

In 2021, the government received World Bank funding to increase access to broadband and select digital public services, and to strengthen the digital innovation ecosystem in the country. The government announced plans to pilot fifth-generation (5G) mobile networks by the end of 2023.⁶ The South Africa-based telecommunications firm MTN conducted a live demonstration of 5G network service in Kigali in October 2023, and another company, SoftBank, in partnership with the Rwandan government, successfully tested 5G communications payloads on a high-altitude unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).⁷

According to the internet speeds aggregator Ookla, Rwandans experienced a median mobile download speed of 21.14 megabits per second (Mbps) and a mobile upload speed of 7.85 Mbps in March 2024.⁸ Median fixed-line broadband download speeds increased slightly from 29.62 to 30.44 Mbps, and upload speeds decreased from 10.18 to 9.58 Mbps, between March 2023 and March 2024.⁹

Limited fixed-line internet infrastructure continues to negatively affect internet access. Nevertheless, developments in the fixed-line market have improved connectivity and reliability. Providers have rolled out national fiber-optic backbone networks to connect to international submarine fiber-optic cables on the east coast of Africa. These cables have provided the entire region with fiber-based international bandwidth for the first time, ending its dependency on satellites. The ISP Liquid Telecom continued to expand Liquid Home, its fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) fixed-line service, to four regions outside Kigali in 2024.¹⁰

Improved access to electricity due to hydropower and solar energy projects has helped increase internet connection speeds and decrease costs. However, only 54.2 percent of the population had access to the national electricity grid as of March 2024,¹¹ which fell far short of the government's ambitious plan to achieve 100 percent electrification by 2024.

A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons? ^{1 / 3}

Internet access is primarily concentrated in Kigali and remains beyond the reach of many citizens, particularly those in rural areas who are limited by low incomes and low levels of digital literacy.¹² However, there have been efforts to reduce costs and expand access for underserved communities.

Poverty continues to be the primary barrier to internet access, and the same obstacle hinders uptake of 3G and 4G mobile services.¹³

According to the *Economist's* Inclusive Internet Index, prepaid mobile data plans with 1 gigabyte (GB) of data cost about 3.5 percent of monthly gross national income (GNI) per capita in 2022; postpaid data plans, by contrast, cost 34.6 percent of monthly GNI per capita.¹⁴ These costs remain prohibitively expensive for the majority of residents. The 2022 Global Connectivity Report from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) found that the price of mobile broadband service was equivalent to more than 15 percent of monthly income for the lowest-earning 40 percent of Rwandans.¹⁵

In February 2023, Starlink, a satellite-based broadband service offered by the US company SpaceX, was issued a license to operate in Rwanda and began providing service (see A4).¹⁶ Although the price of Starlink far exceeds what most residents can afford, the Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT) announced a pilot plan to provide Starlink satellite internet connectivity in 500 schools.¹⁷

While Liquid Telecom launched FTTP mobile and broadband services in October 2022, its internet packages remain unaffordable for the majority of Rwandan residents. Prices for Liquid's FTTP begin at 27,999 Rwandan francs (\$22) for 60 Mbps.¹⁸ MTN Rwanda offers a home fiber-optic service beginning at 20,000 francs (\$16.00) for 15 Mbps.¹⁹

Multiple projects in recent years have sought to improve access to the internet in underserved rural areas.²⁰ A joint ITU and RURA broadband expansion project aims to increase connectivity in rural areas and improve access to government services and information more broadly. According to the ITU, the project also aims to provide free or low-cost internet access to schools, hospitals, and underserved populations.²¹ In November 2022, OneWeb, a British company, signed a partnership with Airtel Africa to deliver high-speed, low-latency low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite connectivity services to government and private-sector customers across Africa, including in Rwanda.²²

A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity? ^{5 / 6}

No restrictions on connectivity were reported in Rwanda during the coverage period, though Article 52 of the 2001 Law Governing Telecommunications gives the government excessive powers over telecommunications networks in the name of preserving "national integrity." These powers include the ability to "suspend a telecommunications service for an indeterminate period, either generally or for certain communications."²³

The local internet exchange point (IXP), the Rwanda Internet Exchange (RINEX),²⁴ is managed by the Rwanda Internet Community and Technology Alliance, a nonprofit organization comprising ICT institutions and professionals.²⁵

Since acquiring hundreds of towers from other providers in 2014, IHS Towers, Africa's largest operator of telecommunications towers, has managed most of these assets in Rwanda.²⁶ Internet freedom activists have suggested that the consolidation of telecommunications infrastructure under one company's ownership may permit the government to exercise greater control, and that the government's security and intelligence agencies collect massive amounts of telecommunications data with the company's help (see C6).²⁷

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict 3 / the diversity of service providers? 6

RURA is not transparent in its oversight of ISPs. However, recent developments in the ISP market have improved competition between providers.

Following the announcement of Rwanda's National Broadband Policy and Strategy in October 2022, the government has sought to increase competition in the broadband market. In February 2023, RURA announced plans to modify the license for KTRN, which had previously held a monopoly on 4G infrastructure in the country, to allow other companies such as MTN and Airtel to deploy their own 4G networks.²⁸

Starlink satellite internet services are licensed in Rwanda and began operating in February 2023 (see A2). Although the costs for satellite internet remain high, the establishment of another ISP could further decrease the market dominance of KTRN.²⁹

As of September 2023, Rwanda had 23 licensed ISPs.³⁰ The fixed-line internet service market is fairly diverse, with the largest market shares held by GVA Rwanda and Liquid Telecom, respectively. However, MTN and Airtel dominate the mobile service market. As of September 2023, RURA reported that MTN Rwanda held 61.8 percent of the country's mobile internet subscriptions, while Airtel Rwanda held another 38.2 percent.³¹

In 2019, an anonymous source from within RURA's legal department said that many ISPs were no longer operational due to the dominance of MTN Rwanda and Airtel. The source indicated that the state has an interest in maintaining the dominance of these two companies because they allow RURA to more easily monitor users.³² According to local sources, government officials and agencies have shares in some

telecommunications companies, which may also enable the state to interfere in their operations.

A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner? 1 / 4

There are no legal guarantees for the autonomy of RURA. The authority reports directly to the office of the prime minister. The government audits RURA's budget, and the president appoints the seven members of its regulatory board and its director general, limiting its autonomy in practice.³³ Evariste Rugigana, previously a director of cabinet in the office of the prime minister, was appointed as director general of RURA in September 2023, succeeding acting director general Emile Patrick Baganizi.³⁴

Previous appointments to RURA have raised concerns about the influence of the military and intelligence services over the regulation of the ICT sector.³⁵

There are no mechanisms for ISPs or other companies regulated by RURA to appeal its decisions.³⁶ Furthermore, no self-regulatory mechanism is available for ISPs.³⁷

B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? 3 / 6

The government restricts the types of online content that users can access, particularly targeting material that strays from the official narrative.

As of May 2024, 15 online radio stations and websites owned by Rwandan dissidents living in exile were inaccessible to those inside the country.³⁸ The Rwandan Senate previously accused these and 11 other online radio stations and websites of genocide denial (see C7).³⁹ Numerous independent news outlets and opposition blogs that have been blocked for years reportedly remained inaccessible during the coverage period,⁴⁰ including the website of the *Rwandan* newspaper, as well as the online publication *Le Prophete*.⁴¹ The websites for independent regional news outlets and those associated with the Rwandan diaspora, such as Rugali, are also blocked.⁴²

In 2019, RURA blocked several Ugandan news sites, including the websites of the *Daily Monitor*, the *Observer*, and the *Independent*, reciprocating the Uganda Communications Commission's blocking of two Rwandan news

sites, the *New Times* and Igihe.⁴³ As of May 2024, the *Daily Monitor*, the *Independent*, and two other Ugandan news sites—ChimpReports and Nile Post—were still reportedly inaccessible in Rwanda, despite the rapprochement the two countries' governments reached in 2022.⁴⁴ The website of SoftPower News, a Ugandan digital media company that had previously been blocked in 2018, also reportedly remained inaccessible at the end of the coverage period.⁴⁵

ISPs and digital content providers are required to use digital content filtering tools to curb "harmful online content" under a set of ministerial instructions on child online protection, issued in January 2024 (see B3).⁴⁶ Cybercafes and other providers of Wi-Fi access are also required to block access to web addresses known to host harmful online content.

Most English-language international news sources, some of which are critical of the Rwandan government, are available online, though there is generally a low readership for English-language content in the country. The website of Agence France-Presse showed signs of blocking on some networks in Rwanda during the coverage period.⁴⁷

Social media platforms and communications applications such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are generally accessible.

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?

The extent to which the government forces websites or digital platforms to delete content is unknown, though anecdotal evidence in recent years suggests that the practice is common. Infringements on online freedom of expression were expected to intensify ahead of the country's July 2024 elections.⁴⁸

According to journalists who have spoken on condition of anonymity, authorities often pressure editors of news sites to delete content that is critical of the government or avoid publishing such content altogether, threatening to block sites that do not comply.⁴⁹ Local journalists refer to the practice as *kunyonga*, or "shutting down anonymously."

Credible sources claim that the Office of the Government Spokesperson (OGS), an official propaganda entity, has administrative access to the websites of some nominally independent newspapers. Designated government employees from the OGS reportedly remove stories that are deemed critical of the Kagame administration on a routine basis.

B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an

independent appeals process?

RURA generally does not provide explanations when local and international news sites are blocked, and website owners have no avenue of appeal for blocking decisions.

According to a 2010 law relating to electronic messages, signatures, and transactions, intermediaries and service providers are not held liable for content transmitted through their networks.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, service providers are required to remove content when they receive a takedown notice, which is usually verbal, and there are no mechanisms for appeal.

In January 2024, the MINICT issued ministerial instructions on child online protection that introduce a variety of requirements for ISPs and digital content providers—defined as any entity that broadcasts, publishes, or provides public access to online content—to restrict children's access to "harmful online content" through the use of filtering tools, parental controls, age verification tools, and other technical measures (see B1).⁵¹ The instructions define "harmful online content" broadly as any content that could negatively impact the development of a child, including child sexual abuse material. The definition also covers content that "depicts, describes, or represents in any manner human sexual organs," which may be interpreted for the overbroad removal of medical or educational information or artistic expression.

B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship? 0 / 4

While Rwandans are active on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, in recent years self-censorship has become ubiquitous among both online journalists and ordinary users due to increasing repression, social pressure to support the government, and fear of reprisals for those who criticize the authorities.⁵² Pressure to report positively on the government was expected to be even higher ahead of Rwanda's July 2024 general elections.

Factors contributing to online self-censorship include the hostile environment for journalists, who risk prosecution and imprisonment for critical, independent reporting (see C3), as well as the disappearance and murder of numerous opposition members in recent years (see C7).⁵³ Internet users typically avoid topics that can be construed as critical of the government or disruptive to national unity and reconciliation.⁵⁴

President Kagame has frequently threatened his critics and accused them of destabilizing the country, further entrenching self-censorship. In a 2019 speech, Kagame warned opponents of his government in the diaspora that "those making noise on the internet do so because they're far from the fire. If they dare get close to it, it will burn them."⁵⁵ Observers argued

that Kagame's threats were genuine, as a number of Rwandan dissidents abroad have been killed, disappeared, or kidnapped and brought back to Rwanda to be imprisoned.⁵⁶

Financial challenges in Rwanda's media sector have driven many media houses and journalists to YouTube channels for monetization, but this platform is also subject to official pressure. In 2020, one editor reported that their outlet was "exercising extreme caution" because of government restrictions on online speech (see C2). The government continues to crack down on YouTubers who contradict the government's narrative.⁵⁷ YouTube commentator Etienne Gatanazi stopped reporting on critical topics after he was threatened with prosecution in 2021; he later left the country (see C7).

B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest? 1 / 4

The government uses both editorial influence and coordinated social media campaigns to manipulate online information.

Beginning in January 2024, a network of over 464 accounts on the social media platform X, which showed signs of coordinated inauthentic behavior, pushed progovernment narratives and amplified content that sought to undermine critics of the regime.⁵⁸ The accounts in this network flooded hashtags to counter investigative reporting that was unfavorable for the government, and used AI-generated images to suggest that opposition presidential candidate Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza was a member of rebel groups based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The accounts remained active in the months leading up to the July elections. Unlike previous campaigns, which had relied on copying and pasting text across multiple accounts, this network used text generated by large-language models, including OpenAI's ChatGPT, to increase the variety within its posts. Researchers said this may have helped the network evade detection.⁵⁹

Other studies of AI-manipulated or synthetic content ahead of the 2024 elections found that it was often used to portray Kagame in a positive light. For example, a series of "cheap fakes" (low-quality deepfakes) showed him taking part in popular dance trends on the short-video platform TikTok. Similarly manipulated content was used to caricature other leaders, including the presidents of Burundi and the DRC.⁶⁰

Progovernment accounts also work to share and post positive comments in response to President Kagame's social media posts, projecting an image of widespread support. These accounts often use the hashtag #TeamPK to show their backing for Kagame's government.⁶¹

Through Itorero, a state-run school that teaches traditional values, and Intore, the graduates of this school, the government has mobilized social media users to counter the views of individuals deemed to be "enemies of the state." According to local sources, members of what has been called the "Twitter Army" are rewarded for their attacks with appointments or nominations to jobs at government institutions, and at private companies with ties to the ruling party. One source said that intelligence services monitor and report social media users who engage constructively with government critics. President Kagame has encouraged supporters to represent the government's interests online and attack those who criticize the government on social media.⁶²

The so-called "Twitter Army" has systematically attacked and discredited individuals and media outlets that criticize the government. Ahead of the 2024 elections, accounts on X frequently responded to news about Diane Rwigara with hateful comments, until she was barred from participating by the electoral commission.⁶³

In addition to such societal mobilization, social media accounts with formal government affiliations regularly debate and harass individuals who post online comments that are considered critical of the government.⁶⁴

Reporting from Forbidden Stories—a nonprofit organization that supports the publication of stories by journalists facing physical threats, including imprisonment and murder—in 2024 uncovered an extensive network of public relations firms based in the United States and the United Kingdom that work to bolster the Rwandan government's reputation and attack its critics. Forbidden Stories' analysis of the posts and accounts in a harassment campaign against several critics living in exile also revealed the potential involvement of the Israeli disinformation and hacking firm Team Jorge (see C7).⁶⁵

The National Electoral Commission requires that presidential candidates be granted equal airtime for campaigning and publicity on state-owned media. Candidates are also not allowed to use state-owned social media platforms for campaigning.⁶⁶ Ahead of the July 2024 elections, candidates were not required to seek approval from the electoral commission to advertise on their personal social media platforms, a reversal of previous requirements.⁶⁷

Security officials and other government authorities frequently interfere with editors at online outlets to prevent the publication of stories on certain topics and to alter content that is critical of the government.⁶⁸ Journalists say that editorial decisions are heavily influenced by government actors—including police and army officers and powerful political leaders—whose demands are colloquially known as "I say this." For example, two anonymous sources confirmed that during the

2017 presidential campaign, editors of Igihe, an online news outlet, were not allowed to publish articles on candidates challenging President Kagame.

According to journalists who were interviewed anonymously, security officials often review journalists' stories and photographs before they are published. One respondent said that authorities have tightened their control of the media by ensuring that each news organization employs a government representative to monitor editorial content.⁶⁹ A wide range of institutions are required to employ government agents, especially those that the government deems to handle potentially sensitive information. Separately, some journalists have come to rely on bribes from government officials to write positive stories, due to the financial challenges of working as an independent journalist (see B6).⁷⁰

In October 2019, a report from the Rwandan Senate accused 26 online radio stations and websites owned by Rwandan dissidents in exile of denying the 1994 genocide (see C7); the report was followed by a February 2020 campaign to share the results of its research.⁷¹ The accusations limited the reach of the websites named in the report, contributing to greater government control of the online media environment.

B6 0-3 pts

**Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively 1 /
affect users' ability to publish content online? 3**

Compared with their state-run counterparts, which receive income from government advertisements and direct subsidies, independent media outlets often struggle financially.⁷² Large businesses generally only advertise with state-owned or progovernment media outlets, based on an unspoken rule.

An increasing proportion of media houses and journalists rely on YouTube channels to finance their content. In April 2020, the RMC released a statement asserting that individuals who ran personal YouTube channels did not qualify as journalists.⁷³ One editor said disqualifying YouTube channels as professional media sources could further reduce the already sparse safeguards for online journalists.⁷⁴

B7 0-4 pts

**Does the online information landscape lack diversity and 1 /
reliability? 4**

Government repression of the media greatly limits the diversity and reliability of the information landscape, both online and offline.

Critical and independent online journalism produced by opposition supporters overseas—mainly in Europe, the United States, and South Africa—is blocked in Rwanda (see B1). Proxy servers can be used to access

blocked content, but few Rwandans are aware of the extent of blocking or the means to circumvent it.⁷⁵

Currently, over 70 percent of the population speaks only Kinyarwanda, making online content in English or other languages inaccessible to most Rwandans.⁷⁶

B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues? 2 / 6

Digital activism on political and social issues is uncommon, despite the widespread availability of mobilization tools; no social media campaigns that criticize the government have been noted in recent years. Rampant surveillance, regulatory limits on SIM-card ownership,⁷⁷ and registration requirements have deterred users from using digital tools for social and political activism that challenges the government (see C4 and C5).

Despite the potential repercussions for online organizing, some Rwandans still use social media to discuss the government's demolition of homes and settlements. While authorities have stated that the actions are meant to prevent deaths in climate-related disasters like landslides and flooding, residents have reported receiving no compensation when their homes are destroyed.⁷⁸

Government-aligned accounts sometimes organize social media campaigns to spread progovernment narratives. For instance, the *ndi Umunyarwanda* ("I am Rwandan") program purports to build national unity and counter the spread of "genocide ideology"—a criminal act under Rwandan law, which bars incitement to genocide and ethnic divisionism but is often applied to silence any dissenting views on the government's preferred narrative about the 1994 genocide (see C2).

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence? 1 / 6

Freedoms of the press, of expression, and of access to information are recognized and guaranteed by the state under Article 38 of the Rwandan constitution.⁷⁹ However, the legal framework is used to restrict fundamental rights in practice, including online. The judiciary is not independent, and many journalists who publish material online view the threat of imprisonment as a significant constraint on their work.

In 2019, the Supreme Court repealed a law that banned the publication of political cartoons but upheld the criminal offense of defamation against the president (see C2). The decision drew an explicit distinction between the head of state and other public officials,⁸⁰ and was viewed as evidence of the judiciary's deference to the executive. The judiciary was further criticized for its lack of independence in March 2024, when it upheld the exclusion of opposition leader Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya from the July 2024 elections.⁸¹ Ingabire had previously been imprisoned for terrorism and genocide denial but was pardoned in 2018.

C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards? 1 / 4

Rwandan law restricts free expression and imposes criminal and civil penalties for legitimate online activities, sometimes calling for high fines and heavy prison sentences.

A cybersecurity law passed in 2018 imposes up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of between 1 million francs (\$800) and 3 million francs (\$2,400) for publishing "rumors that may incite fear, insurrection, or violence or that may make a person lose their credibility."⁸² In addition, anyone who "establishes, publishes, or uses a site of a terrorist group" faces imprisonment of 15 to 20 years and a fine of between 20 million francs (\$16,000) and 50 million francs (\$40,000).⁸³ The government considers many exiled opposition organizations to be "terrorist groups," which has contributed to concerns that the law will be used to further crack down on nonviolent opposition activity.⁸⁴

Defamation of the president is a criminal offense, for which 2018 revisions to the penal code impose prison sentences of five to seven years.⁸⁵ Many other, often vaguely worded penal code provisions contain undue restrictions on freedom of expression that can be applied to online activities. Notably, the spread of "false information or harmful propaganda with intent to cause a hostile international opinion against [the] Rwanda government" carries penalties of between seven and 10 years' imprisonment in peacetime, and life imprisonment during wartime.⁸⁶

Defamation against private individuals was decriminalized under the revised code. A provision in the code that criminalized the "humiliation of national authorities," including through cartoons, was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2019 (see C1).⁸⁷

An ICT law enacted in 2016 created a new legal and regulatory framework for the sector and codified specific restrictions on internet activities that are antithetical to internet freedom.⁸⁸ Most notably, provisions in the law prohibit the dissemination of "grossly offensive" or "indecent" messages

as well as the use of ICTs to cause "annoyance, inconvenience, or needless anxiety."⁸⁹

The law against "genocide ideology," as amended in 2013, also threatens freedom of expression both online and off, prescribing prison sentences of up to nine years as well as fines for any offender "who disseminates genocide ideology in public through documents, speeches, pictures, media, or any other means."⁹⁰ What qualifies as "genocide ideology" is intentionally left vague, and broad interpretations of the law have been used to restrict free speech.⁹¹

C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those 2 / that are protected under international human rights standards? 6

Citizens and journalists are periodically arrested for online activities, though the high degree of self-censorship practiced by journalists and ordinary users alike has resulted in fewer arrests in recent years. Cases may also be underreported, given the government's strict control of the media.

Journalist Jean Paul Nkundineza, who publishes through his YouTube channel 3D TV Plus, was arrested in October 2023 on charges of public insult, harassment of a whistleblower, threats, and dissemination of false information; the case stemmed from a YouTube video in which he implicated a former Miss Rwanda pageant winner in the imprisonment of the previous head of Miss Rwanda.⁹² He was convicted of public insult and defamation, fined 1.1 million francs (\$875), and given a three-year prison sentence in April 2024.⁹³

In September 2023, Umuhoza Honore was released from the custody of the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) after five days in detention for allegedly posting illegal content on his YouTube channel.⁹⁴ After his release, Honore said he would sue the RIB for illegal detention, claiming that his family was not informed of his whereabouts after he was arrested. He was arrested again in January 2024 for allegedly writing a fraudulent check.⁹⁵

Six people were arrested in April and May 2024 on charges of public indecency for content they posted on their YouTube channels. If convicted, they could face three to five years' imprisonment and fines of between 1 million and 3 million francs (\$800 to \$2,400).⁹⁶

In November 2021, a court sentenced Dieudonné Niyonsenga to seven years in prison and a fine of 5 million francs (\$4,000) on charges of humiliating state officials.⁹⁷ Niyonsenga operated a YouTube channel, Ishema TV, on which he discussed human rights abuses perpetrated by Rwandan authorities. His lawyers have stated that prison officials denied Niyonsenga access to documents he needed to prepare his

defense.⁹⁸ When his lawyers raised this issue, the officials said he had no right to his documents.⁹⁹ In January 2024, Niyonsenga reported to the court that he had been subjected to torture while in detention (see C7).¹⁰⁰

In September 2021, YouTuber Yvonne Idamange was convicted on charges that included inciting violence, genocide denial, and spreading rumors after she posted videos that were critical of President Kagame.¹⁰¹ She was sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined the equivalent of \$2,000. After the prosecution appealed the decision, Idamange's sentence was increased in March 2023 to 17.5 years for the additional crimes of treason and writing a fraudulent check.¹⁰²

In October 2021, Théoneste Nsengimana, a journalist, was arrested ahead of a planned discussion on his YouTube channel with opposition politician Victoria Ingabire Umuhoza.¹⁰³ The RIB later announced that Nsengimana and five others had been arrested and detained for "publication of rumors intended to cause uprising or unrest among the population." As of June 2024, Nsengimana was still in pretrial detention.¹⁰⁴

In May 2021, police arrested Aimable Karasira, a YouTube commentator and former university professor, and charged him with genocide denial for his social media activity.¹⁰⁵ He later received additional charges for "illicit enrichment" over funds that he allegedly possessed with no adequate explanation.¹⁰⁶ Karasira told a judge in 2022 that he had been subjected to torture in detention and denied medical treatment, and that authorities were inflicting the same treatment on Christopher Kayumba—a journalist who was also detained at the time—and on Dieudonné Niyonsenga (see C7).¹⁰⁷ In 2023, the court recommended that Karasira undergo psychiatric evaluation before his trial could continue.¹⁰⁸ In a January 2024 court appearance, Karasira's lawyer raised concerns that he had struggled to meet privately with his client while in prison and noted that unknown individuals had attempted to eavesdrop on their meetings. In May 2024, the lawyer withdrew from the case for undisclosed reasons. Karasira requested assistance from the court to find new representation, as his assets had been frozen.¹⁰⁹ He remained in prison at the end of the coverage period.

C4 0-4 pts

Does the government place restrictions on anonymous 3 / communication or encryption? 4

The ability to communicate anonymously is compromised by mandatory SIM-card registration requirements that have been in place since 2013.¹¹⁰ Under the law, RURA has unfettered access to SIM-card databases managed by telecommunications companies, while other "authorized" individuals or institutions may also be granted access.¹¹¹

In recent years, RURA has sought to revise regulations on SIM-card registration, ostensibly to tackle fraud, identity theft, phishing, and SIM boxing (a process that disguises an international call as a local one). In 2019, RURA announced that mobile phone users could not use more than three SIM cards on each network. The new regulations required users to register each new SIM card with their national identification document. Foreigners, meanwhile, can use only one SIM card. RURA justified the regulations on security grounds, arguing that the proliferation of SIM cards made it more difficult to track criminal activity.¹¹² Critics argued that the regulations were meant to collect users' data, since many people have evaded state monitoring by buying and registering SIM cards with false identities. The various legal provisions that enable surveillance and limit anonymity are particularly troubling in the absence of an adequate data protection law (see C6).¹¹³

Article 123 of Rwanda's ICT Law mandates the installation of interception tools to compromise encryption and requires companies to install "back doors" that allow for circumvention of encryption measures.¹¹⁴

C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' 1 / right to privacy? 6

The full extent of the authorities' surveillance capabilities is unknown, though the government is known to use commercial spyware tools, and there is a strong sense among observers that surveillance is pervasive. The government closely monitors social media discussions, as evidenced by the prevalence of progovernment commenters on major platforms (see B5). Exiled dissidents have been attacked and murdered, despite their efforts to protect their identities, following threats from individuals inside or associated with the government.¹¹⁵

The Rwandan government has been known to use Pegasus, a surveillance software product developed by the Israeli technology firm NSO Group, against opposition figures, journalists, and human rights defenders. A spokesperson for NSO Group stated in 2024 that Rwanda had not been a client of the company since 2021, and this was corroborated by the independent research group Citizen Lab.¹¹⁶

In July 2021, Amnesty International and Forbidden Stories identified more than 3,500 phone numbers linked to Rwandan activists, journalists, and politicians in a leaked dataset.¹¹⁷ The civil society investigators described the dataset as a list of people of interest to NSO Group clients; the analysis identified the Rwandan government as a likely client, though the government denied the accusation.¹¹⁸ Further investigations by Forbidden Stories of leaked Pegasus data in 2024 revealed that phone numbers selected for surveillance in 2017 and 2018 included high-ranking

members of the government and the RPF, in addition to government critics.¹¹⁹

Dissidents and other targets of the Rwandan government report credible fears that their devices have been compromised by Pegasus. These include David Batenga, nephew of assassinated Kagame critic and former intelligence chief Patrick Karegeya, and members of the Rwanda National Congress (RNC) and the United Democratic Forces-Inkingi, opposition parties that the government has accused of terrorism.¹²⁰ More recently identified as possible targets for surveillance were Anne Rwigara, sister of presidential candidate Diane Rwigara; Gatera Gashabana, the Rwigaras' lawyer; and a journalist who covered the criminal case against Diane and her mother Adeline Rwigara.¹²¹ Forensic analysis of Anne Rwigara's phone could not be conducted to confirm infection; she died mysteriously in December 2023.¹²²

Members of opposition groups in exile have expressed suspicions that devices belonging to Paul Rusesabagina, a prominent critic of Kagame who was abducted in 2020 while traveling through the United Arab Emirates, were compromised, possibly by Pegasus.¹²³ Carine Kanimba, Rusesabagina's daughter who advocated for his freedom, was targeted by attempted Pegasus attacks throughout 2021, and investigators identified several Pegasus infections on Kanimba's phone.¹²⁴ In July 2022, Citizen Lab investigations found that the mobile phone of a Belgian citizen who is a nephew of Paul Rusesabagina was hacked nearly a dozen times in 2020 using Israeli-made surveillance technology.¹²⁵

In September 2021, Belgium's military intelligence service assessed that the devices of a Belgian journalist and his wife were likely targeted by Pegasus software, and that the attack was probably initiated by Rwandan authorities.¹²⁶

In October 2019, WhatsApp disclosed that a vulnerability in the application was exploited to target Rwandan dissidents through Pegasus. At least 1,400 people were identified as having been targeted by the vulnerability, of which a "considerable number" were Rwandan.¹²⁷

In 2018, the government passed a law that extended surveillance powers to a civilian institution, the Office of the Ombudsman, to investigate corruption-related crimes.¹²⁸ The law came into effect as part of the new penal code later that year.¹²⁹ Previously, interception powers were only held by security agencies, such as the police, the military, intelligence services, and the RIB. The legislation was vague about whose communications could be intercepted. Press freedom advocates believe that the law could further threaten independent journalism. Communications can still be legally intercepted without prior authorization from a judge.

The 2013 Law Relating to the Interception of Communications expanded the government's surveillance powers, authorizing high-ranking security officials to tap the communications, including online activity, of individuals considered to be potential threats to "public security."¹³⁰ While the law requires government officials to apply for an interception warrant, warrants are issued by the national prosecutor, who is appointed by the justice minister. The national prosecutor can also issue warrants verbally in urgent security investigations, to be followed by a written warrant within 24 hours. The law provides for the appointment of "inspectors" to ensure that authorized interceptions are carried out in accordance with the law, though the inspectors are appointed by the president and lack independence.¹³¹ There is no requirement to justify surveillance as necessary and proportionate to a legitimate aim.¹³² This leaves the law vulnerable to abuse.

Government authorities have used private conversations on mobile chat apps as evidence in the prosecutions of dissidents, heightening concerns about the government's ability to intercept communications on social media platforms.

C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy? 1 / 6

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to strict data-localization requirements under the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy Law that came into effect during the coverage period.

Rwandan authorities are presumed to compel service providers to assist in monitoring and surveillance. Trust in the privacy of online data is generally low.¹³³

In October 2021, Parliament enacted the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy Law,¹³⁴ which includes provisions on users' data rights, general rules for data collection and processing, and a requirement to store personal data within Rwanda.¹³⁵ Article 19 East Africa, a freedom of expression organization, noted that the law would harm digital and traditional media outlets, which are not granted a public-interest exception under the law and would thus risk criminal and civil sanctions for their reporting. The organization's analysis also raised concerns about the law's designation of the Rwandan cybersecurity authority, which is not independent from government influence, as the country's data protection authority.¹³⁶

The deadline for companies to begin complying with the law was October 2023, and there were no known penalties issued for noncompliance as of the end of the coverage period. MTN Rwanda partnered with the

cybersecurity authority to educate the public about their rights under the law.¹³⁷

Under the 2013 Law Relating to the Interception of Communications (see C5), communications service providers are required to ensure that their systems have the technical capability to intercept communications on demand. Security officials also have the power to "intercept communications using equipment that is not facilitated by communication service providers," which effectively allows the authorities to access a telecommunications network without a provider's authorization, knowledge, or assistance.¹³⁸

In 2018, interviews with anonymous local sources confirmed that government representatives are systematically embedded within the operations of telecommunications companies for the purpose of surveillance. Telecommunications technicians also routinely intercept communications on behalf of the military.

The consolidation of telecommunications towers under one company, IHS Towers, in 2014 raised fears among internet activists that the company has assisted the government in collecting intelligence (see A3).

According to a staff member of a major telecommunications company active in Rwanda who was interviewed in 2015, security agents routinely provide the company with phone numbers to target for monitoring. In most cases, these are phone numbers of journalists, opposition politicians, or government officials suspected to have ties to the opposition in exile.¹³⁹

C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities? 1 / 5

Opposition politicians and independent journalists face arbitrary detention, extralegal violence, and forced disappearance when attempting to cover news stories, leading many journalists to flee the country.¹⁴⁰ Progovernment trolls regularly threaten and harass journalists and ordinary users on social media for posts that are critical of the authorities. An environment of intimidation has instilled fear and muzzled opposition to the government.

In June 2022, Dieudonné Niyonsenga, a YouTube commentator for the channel Ishema TV who was imprisoned in 2021 (see C3), reportedly showed his sister injuries he had received from beatings and claimed that he had been subjected to sexual torture while in prison. Niyonsenga has also reportedly been denied adequate food, medication, and money sent to him by family.¹⁴¹ In January 2024, he appeared in court with a head

wound, and said he had been held in a "hole" under inhumane conditions that had impaired his hearing and vision.¹⁴²

Théoneste Nsengimana, who had been in pretrial detention since 2021 (see C3), was placed in solitary confinement for two weeks in 2024 and was denied family visits. When his wife was able to visit him in June 2024, she said that he had been denied food and that his health had declined as a result.¹⁴³

Aimable Karasira, a commentator on the YouTube channel Ukuri Mbona who was arrested in May 2021 (see C3), accused prison authorities of torturing him through sleep deprivation and beatings during his May 2022 court hearing. He also claimed that he was denied medical treatment for his diabetes and mental health issues.¹⁴⁴

Extralegal violence against dissidents, including journalists and other government critics, creates an atmosphere of intimidation. John Williams Ntwali, an investigative journalist who published videos on YouTube, was killed on January 18, 2023, in what police reported as a motorbike accident. However, authorities failed to produce a police report, photo or video evidence, or other details related to the accident, prompting international human rights organizations to call for an independent investigation into his death.¹⁴⁵ The driver of the car that allegedly killed Ntwali was convicted in a trial without independent observers present.¹⁴⁶ The circumstances of the accident raised suspicions that security agencies were involved in the killing.

Nuhu Bihibindi, journalist and founder of the online newspaper Umuyoboro, who met with Ntwali the night before his death, also disappeared in February 2023.¹⁴⁷ His whereabouts were still unknown at the end of the coverage period.¹⁴⁸

Samuel Baker Byansiand, who with Ntwali was investigating the deaths of Rwandan soldiers in the eastern DRC, was arrested and interrogated by police after a reporting trip to Goma in late 2022. He fled the country shortly afterward, expressing fears for his and Ntwali's safety.¹⁴⁹

Agnes Uwimana Nkusi, the owner of the *Umurabyo* newspaper and its online channel who previously served a five-year prison term for publishing articles that criticized Kagame and the government, reported receiving threats in May 2024 that led her to flee Rwanda for a neighboring country.¹⁵⁰ She later said she had received information that Rwandan intelligence agencies had sent people to kidnap or kill her where she had taken refuge.¹⁵¹

In February 2023, online journalist Jean Paul Nkundineza was reported missing by his family. When he was found four days later, he alleged that he had been illegally detained by security forces (see C3).¹⁵²

YouTube journalists and commentators increasingly face online harassment for posting videos that discuss the 1994 genocide or crimes committed by the ruling RPF in its aftermath. In May 2021, Aimable Karasira and Etienne Gatanazi, a commentator on the Real Talk YouTube channel, were subjected to online harassment campaigns accusing them of working for dissident groups in exile after they posted YouTube videos expressing views that were critical of the government.¹⁵³ Gatanazi reportedly received warnings on several occasions not to interview opposition politicians accused of genocide denial or give them unwarranted attention. After he was threatened with prosecution for genocide denial in 2021, he stopped posting on his YouTube channel and is believed to have fled the country (see B4).¹⁵⁴

Innocent Bahati, a poet and singer who published poems on YouTube that are critical of the government, went missing in February 2021. In February 2022, authorities claimed that he had crossed the border into Uganda and joined an opposition group fighting the Rwandan government.¹⁵⁵ Bahati's whereabouts remained unknown during the coverage period, despite numerous calls from international rights organizations for the government to present him in court.¹⁵⁶

Ndahiro Valens Papy, a journalist for station BTN TV who also publishes on YouTube and X, was assaulted by two security officers in March 2024 while filming the demolition of homes in Kigali, which residents said was done illegally.¹⁵⁷

Individuals and media outlets that criticize the government are systematically attacked online by progovernment trolls and networks of bot accounts. Social media accounts affiliated with the government also harass individuals who post comments that are considered critical of the government.¹⁵⁸ Those in exile who publish content that is critical of the regime are also targeted with significant harassment and intimidation on social media, along with attempts to discredit them.¹⁵⁹

Presidential aspirant Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, who was barred by courts from running in the July 2024 vote due to a previous conviction for spreading "genocide ideology," was frequently targeted with harassment on X during the coverage period. Networks of inauthentic progovernment accounts on the platform also used AI-generated images to depict her as a member of rebel groups in the DRC (see B5).

Several government critics living in exile, including Placide Kayumba, Charles Onana, and members of Jambo News, a media outlet based in Belgium, were targeted with online harassment campaigns using bot accounts on X in 2023. Analysis of the posts and accounts in the campaign revealed the potential involvement of Israeli disinformation and hacking firm Team Jorge (see B5).¹⁶⁰

Michela Wrong, a British investigative journalist, has been regularly harassed online since authoring a book about the RPF. She was also targeted by a team of employees at a British public-relations firm who harassed her through multiple online channels, including social media, Change.org, and Amazon book reviews in 2021 and 2022.

In October 2019, the Rwandan Senate released a report on genocide denial in foreign countries, creating a definition of genocide denial that included claims of a second genocide against the Hutu ethnic group. The report listed the social media accounts and websites of 26 groups and individuals that it accused of denying the Rwandan genocide. The list included online radio stations and news sites owned by prominent opposition politicians and parties in exile. The report called for government agencies to monitor genocide denialism in newspapers and online, and for young people to use social media to protest against genocide deniers.¹⁶¹ The report prompted a wave of online harassment that targeted the websites named by the Senate. The media websites are no longer accessible in Rwanda (see B1).

C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack? 2 / 3

Incidents of hacking and cyberattacks occur frequently in Rwanda, though there were no reported hacking attempts or cyberattacks against online news outlets or government websites during the coverage period.

In July 2022, the RIB reported that the country had experienced a total of 254 cybercrime cases in the 2020–2021 fiscal year.¹⁶² According to the authorities, hackers most commonly target financial institutions. In a bid to counter cybercrime activities, the government has constructed a Regional Cybercrime Investigation Centre of Excellence within the Rwanda National Police headquarters, which provides services like training and a digital forensic laboratory to investigate cybercrimes.¹⁶³

In February 2020, the news site Taarifa reported a cyberattack against a government data center that hosts sensitive servers. The attack reportedly brought down government websites, including those of the president and the Ministry of Defence.¹⁶⁴

The cybersecurity law passed in 2018 includes provisions that address hacking and other threats to online security (see C2).

Footnotes

- ¹"Statistics Report for Telecom, Media and Broadcasting Sector as of the Third Quarter of the Year 2023," Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA), accessed September 13,

2024, https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/statistics/Report_of_Statistics...

- 2Simon Kemp, "Digital 2024: Rwanda," DataReportal, February 23, 2024, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-rwanda>.
- 3"Statistics Report for Telecom, Media and Broadcasting Sector as of the Third Quarter of the Year 2023," Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority, accessed May 7, 2024, https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/statistics/Report_of_Statistics...; "Digital Development Dashboard: Rwanda," International Telecommunications Union (ITU), accessed September 22, 2023, https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/DDD/ddd_RWA.pdf.
- 4"Rwanda: Optimization of the KTRN National fiber backbone and 4G Network," The Public – Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF), April 1, 2019, <https://ppiaf.org/activity/rwanda-optimization-ktrn-national-fiber-back...>; "Digital Development Dashboard: Rwanda," ITU, accessed September 22, 2023, https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/DDD/ddd_RWA.pdf.
- 5Caroline Mbugua, "Rwanda Reverse Decision to Depend on Single Wholesale Network," Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA), November 16, 2022, <https://www.gsma.com/subsaharanafrica/rwanda-reverses-decision-to-depen...>
- 6Emmanuel Ntirenganya, "Rwanda Set to Pilot 5G Internet," AllAfrica, June 2, 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202306050211.html>.
- 7Kavit Majithia, "Rwanda, SoftBank claim 5G HAPS stratosphere first", Mobile World Live, October 17, 2023, <https://www.mobileworldlive.com/network-tech/rwanda-softbank-claim-5g-h...>; "MTN Rwanda showcases 5G at the Mobile World Congress Africa in Kigali," MTN, October 18, 2023, <https://www.mtn.com/mtn-rwanda-showcases-5g-at-the-mobile-world-congres...>; James Barton, "Rwanda and SoftBank claim world's first 5G connectivity from the stratosphere," Developing Telecoms, October 17, 2023, <https://developingtelecoms.com/telecom-business/operator-news/15631-rwa...>
- 8"Rwandan Median Country Speeds," Ookla SpeedTest Global Index, accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.speedtest.net/global-index/rwanda#fixed>.
- 9Ibid.
- 10"Liquid Intelligent Technologies Rwanda expands fixed broadband connectivity to users in upcountry regions," Liquid Intelligent Technologies, June 14, 2024, <https://liquid.tech/about-us/news/liquid-intelligent-technologies-expan...>

- 11"Electricity access," Rwanda Energy Group, accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.reg.rw/what-we-do/access/>.
- 12"Measuring ICT sector performance and Tracking ICT for Development (ICT4D)," Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Youth and ICT, December 2012, <http://admin.theiguides.org/Media/Documents/Rwanda-ICT-Profile-2012.pdf>.
- 13"The Inclusive Internet Index," The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022, <https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/explore/countries/RW/?category=aff...>; "Rwanda Telecommunications Report," BMI, accessed February 29, 2024, <https://store.fitchsolutions.com/telecommunications/rwanda-telecommunic...>
- 14"The Inclusive Internet Index," The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022, <https://impact.economist.com/projects/inclusive-internet-index/2022/cou...>
- 15"Global Connectivity Report 2022," International Telecommunications Union, 2022, <https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-ind-global-01-2022/>.
- 16Diane Iriza, "Starlink deploys satellite internet in Rwanda," Africa News, February 17, 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/17/starlink-deploys-satellite-intern...>
- 17Mark Bowen, "Liquid Telecom Rwanda launches fast fibre broadband in Kigali," Intelligent CIO, March 2, 2020, <https://www.intelligentcio.com/africa/2020/03/02/liquid-telecom-rwanda-...>; "Starlink set for Rwanda's as government looks to connect 3000 schools," CommsUpdate, February 16, 2023, <https://www.commsupdate.com/articles/2023/02/16/starlink-set-for-rwanda...>
- 18"Internet Packages," Liquid, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://rw.liquidhome.tech/products-and-services/packages/fibre>; "Liquid unveils Liquid Home brand for broadband services in eight markets," Comms Update, October 19, 2022, <https://www.commsupdate.com/articles/2022/10/19/liquid-unveils-liquid-h...>
- 19"Home Internet Form," MTN Rwanda, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.mtn.co.rw/home-internet-form/>.
- 20"Giga Transforms Schools in Rural Rwanda, One School at the time," International Telecommunications Union, October 12, 2022, <https://giga.global/giga-finances-school-connectivity-in-rwanda/>.

- 21 "In Rwanda, Broadband Internet connects rural communities to a bright future," ITU News, October 5, 2018, <https://news.itu.int/broadband-internet-connects-rural-communities-rwan...>
- 22 "OneWeb Partners with Airtel for LEO Satellite Connectivity in 14 African Countries," Comms Update, November 10, 2022, <https://www.commsupdate.com/articles/2022/11/10/oneweb-partners-airtel-....>
- 23 "Law No. 44/2001 of 30/11/2001 Governing Telecommunications, Chapter XIV. Rights of the Republic in Issues of Integrity," Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority, accessed April 25, 2023, <http://www.rura.rw/fileadmin/laws/TelecomLaw.pdf>.
- 24 "About Us," RINEX, accessed April 25, 2023, <http://www.rinex.org.rw/about.html>.
- 25 ".RW a name, your identity," Rwanda Internet Communications & Technology Association, accessed April 25, 2023, <https://ricta.org.rw/index.php>.
- 26 Kieron Osmotherly, "MTN announces sale of mobile network towers to IHS in Rwanda and Zambia" TowerExchange, February 20, 2014, <https://www.towerxchange.com/mtn-announces-sale-of-mobile-network-tower...>; "IHS Limited LTD," FMO Entrepreneurial Development Bank, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.fmo.nl/project-detail/42316>.
- 27 Interview with a Rwandan activist, March 2, 2020.
- 28 Matshepo Sehloho, "Korean Telecom Rwanda Networks loses 4G Infrastructure Monopoly," Connecting Africa, February 7, 2023, https://www.connectingafrica.com/author.asp?section_id=816&doc_id=78309....
- 29 "Starlink set for Rwanda's as government looks to connect 3000 schools," CommsUpdate, February 16, 2023, <https://www.commsupdate.com/articles/2023/02/16/starlink-set-for-rwanda....>
- 30 "Statistics Report for Telecom, Media and Broadcasting Sector as the Third Quarter of the Year July-September, 2023," Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority, accessed March 21, 2024, https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/statistics/Report_of_Statistics....
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Interview conducted by consultant in 2019.
- 33 "Law N.09/2013 of 01/03/2013 Establishing Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) and Determining its Mission, Powers, Organization and Functioning," Official Gazette n.14bis of 08/04/2013,

August 4,
2013, http://www.rura.rw/fileadmin/laws/Official_Gazette_no_14_bis_of_08_04_2....

- ³⁴Edmund Kagire, "New appointments: western province, RURA, water and energy utilities get new heads," KT Press, September 4, 2023, <https://www.ktpress.rw/2023/09/new-appointments-western-province-rura-w....>
- ³⁵Athan Tashobya, "President Kagame appoints more leaders," The New Times, September 3, 2017, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/219189>.
- ³⁶"Law N°09/2013 OF 01/03/2013 Establishing Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA)," Official Gazette n°14bis of 08/04/2013, August 4, 2013, https://rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/report/Official_Gazette_no_14_bis_of_08_....
- ³⁷Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) was initially created by the Law n° 39/2001 of 13 September 2001 with the mission to regulate certain public utilities, namely: telecommunications network and/or telecommunications services, electricity, water, removal of waste products from residential or business premises, extraction and distribution of gas and transport of goods and persons. This Law was further reviewed and replaced by Law N° 09/2013 of 01/03/2013, <https://rura.rw/index.php?id=44>.
- ³⁸Interview conducted by consultant in April 2024.
- ³⁹"PRESS RELEASE: Senate to conduct a campaign on its Genocide denial research findings," Republic of Rwanda Parliament-Senate, January 20, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201014054417/https://www.parliament.gov.rw...>; "The Structure of Genocide Denial and Demonstration Tutsis in Foreign Countries and Strategies Against It, Republic of Rwanda Parliament-Senate, 2019, https://www.parliament.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/important_documents....
- ⁴⁰Interview conducted by consultant in April 2024.
- ⁴¹Dan McDevitt, "New Report Investigates Internet Censorship During Rwanda's 2017 Presidential Election," Open Technology Fund, October 3, 2017, <https://www.opentech.fund/news/new-report-investigates-internet-censors....>
- ⁴²Interview conducted by consultant in April 2024.
- ⁴³Ivan R. Mugisha, "Rwanda says Uganda agrees to unblock news sites," The East African, August 23, 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/rwanda-says-ugand...>; Jerry Chifamba, "East Africa: Two Days After Burying

Hatchet, Rwanda and Uganda at it Again," August 23, 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201908230735.html>; James Opio, "Rwanda blocks all Ugandan Newspapers deemed pro Museveni," TrumpetNews, August 23, 2019, <https://trumpetnews.co.ug/rwanda-blocks-all-ugandan-websites-deemed-pro...>

- 44 "Rwanda's Kagame in Uganda on rare visit as ties warm," Al Jazeera, April 24, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/24/rwandas-kagame-in-uganda-on-ra...>
- 45 Interview conducted by consultant in April 2024.
- 46 "Ministerial Instructions N° 001/MINICT/2024 of 22/01/2024 on child online protection," Ministry of ICT and Innovation, January 22, 2024, <https://www.minijust.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=91546&token=d5...>
- 47 OONI Explorer, "Measurement Aggregation Toolkit," Open Observatory of Network Interference, accessed August 2024, https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=RW&since=2023-06-01&until=...
- 48 Jeffrey Moyo, "Rwanda's digital free speech comes under siege," Friedrich Naumann Foundation, March 2022, <https://www.freiheit.org/sub-saharan-africa/rwandas-digital-free-speech...>
- 49 Interview with journalists for Igihe and Kigali Today.
- 50 "Law No. 18/2010 of 12/05/2010, Relating to Electronic Messages, Electronic Signatures and Electronic Transactions," Wipo IP Portal, accessed September 22, 2023, http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=243157.
- 51 "Ministerial Instructions N° 001/MINICT/2024 of 22/01/2024 on child online protection," Ministry of ICT and Innovation, January 22, 2024, <https://www.minijust.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=91546&token=d5...>
- 52 "World Report 2023: Rwanda," Human Rights Watch, accessed April 25, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/rwanda#eaa21f>.
- 53 Kara Fox, "Opposition members keep going 'missing' in Rwanda. Few expect them to return," CNN, July 27, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/27/africa/rwanda-opposition-disappearances-...>; "Top Rwandan Journalist Killed in Road Crash, Police say," The East African, January 20, 2023, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/top-rwanda-journa...>
- 54 Katrin Matthaei, "Rwanda: Censorship or self-censorship?" Deutsche Welle, December 9, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/en/rwanda->

[censorship-or-self-censorship/a-18118956](#).

- [55](#)Presidency Rwanda (@UrugwiroVillage), "President Kagame: You were told after you went to the internet, stole from America, South Africa, disciplined in France, kidnapped from afar, and there were far and away. The lower beam the bark will yield. The ones they call cheating, they are ridiculous," Twitter, May 8, 2019, <https://twitter.com/UrugwiroVillage/status/1126081137586200576>.
- [56](#)Abdi Latif Dahir, "Paul Rusesabagina of 'Hotel Rwanda' Fame was 'Kidnapped,'" The New York Times, September 18, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/01/world/africa/rwanda-paul-rusesabagin....>
- [57](#)Interview with a local YouTuber, April 2024.
- [58](#)Wack, Linvill, and Warren, "Old Despots, New Tricks: An AI-Empowered Pro-Kagame/RPF Coordinated Influence Network on X," Media Forensics Hub, Clemson University, June 20, 2024, <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context....>
- [59](#)Morgan Wack, "AI propaganda campaign in Rwanda has been pushing pro-Kagame messages – a dangerous new trend in Africa," The Conversation, July 11, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/ai-propaganda-campaign-in-rwanda-has-been-p....>
- [60](#)Richard Ngamita, "Synthetic Media in Rwanda's 2024 Elections," Thraets, July 18, 2024, <https://thraets.org/synthetic-media-in-rwandas-2024-elections/>.
- [61](#)"#TeamPK," X, accessed August 2024, https://twitter.com/hashtag/TeamPK?src=hashtag_click&f=live.
- [62](#)Paul Kagame, "RPF extended National Executive Committee meeting | Remarks by President Kagame," YouTube, April 30, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Novi2E7jwQ>.
- [63](#)BBC News Gahuza (@bbcgahuza), "Diane Rwigara arashaka kwiyamamariza kuba perezida w'u #Rwanda Mu mpera z'icyumweru gitaha nibwo Komisiyo y'amatora izatangira kwakira kandidatire z'abifuza imyanya mu matora ateganyijwe muri Nyakanga (7) <https://bbc.in/3y9KuLX>," X, May 8, 2024, <https://x.com/bbcgahuza/status/1788168990008684769?t=oEWyc3liBbwS4P2mmw....>
- [64](#)"Rwanda's media self-regulator subjected to intimidation campaign," Reporters without Borders, November 7, 2014, <https://rsf.org/en/news/rwandas-media-self-regulator-subjected-intimida...>; Tom Rhodes, "Twitter war shines light on how Rwanda intimidates press," Committee to Protect Journalists, March 24, 2014, <https://cpj.org/x/59d6>.

- ⁶⁵Phineas Rueckert and Karine Pfenniger, "In the West and online, Rwanda's influence machine keeps churning," Forbidden Stories, May 28, 2024, <https://forbiddenstories.org/in-the-west-and-online-rwandas-influence-m...>
- ⁶⁶"Amabwiriza n0 01/2017 yo ku wa 04/04/2017 ya komisiyo y'igihugu y'amatora, agenga itora rya perezida wa repubulika mu 2017, nk'uko yahinduwe kandi yujwe kugeza ubu (Regulation n0 01/2017 of 04/04/2017 of the National Electoral Commission, regulating the election of the president of the republic in 2017, as amended and fulfilled so far)," National Electoral Commission, last accessed September 13, 2024, https://nec.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Electoral_regulations/AMABWIRI...
- ⁶⁷Abdur Rahman Alfa Shaban, "Rwanda's electoral body challenged over vetting of social media campaign," Africa News, June 2, 2017, <https://www.africanews.com/2017/06/02/rwanda-s-electoral-body-challenge...>
- ⁶⁸Interview with online journalist, February 24, 2016.
- ⁶⁹Interviews conducted by consultant in 2019.
- ⁷⁰Nsengumukiza Prudence, "Living in constant fear: My 10 years of experience as a journalist in Rwanda," Jambo News, May 6, 2022, <https://www.jambonews.net/en/actualites/20220506-living-in-constant-fea...>
- ⁷¹"PRESS RELEASE: Senate to conduct a campaign on its Genocide denial research findings," Republic of Rwanda Parliament-Senate, January 1, 2020, https://www.parliament.gov.rw/index.php?id=32&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=204...; "The Structure of Genocide Denial and Demonstration Tutsis in Foreign Countries and Strategies Against It," Republic of Rwanda Parliament-Senate, November 20, 2019, https://www.parliament.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/important_documents...
- ⁷²Tom Rhodes, "Advertising and censorship in East Africa's press," Pambazuka News, February 19, 2014, <http://www.pambazuka.org/governance/advertising-and-censorship-east-afr...>
- ⁷³RMC (@RMC_Rwanda), "Statement addressed to all journalists during the covid-19 pandemic," Twitter, April 13, 2020, https://twitter.com/RMC_Rwanda/status/1249730987703009280/photo/1.
- ⁷⁴Interview with an editor, May 9, 2020.
- ⁷⁵Author interviews with anonymous journalists.
- ⁷⁶Timothy P. Williams, "For the third time in 11 years, Rwanda changed the language used in primary schools," The Washington

Post, January 24, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/01/24/third-time-11-years-....>

- 77 "Rwanda Telecommunications Report," MBI, accessed February 29, 2024, <https://store.fitchsolutions.com/telecommunications/rwanda-telecommunic....>
- 78 "Rwanda climate change: Kigali homes built near wetlands are destroyed," BBC, December 16, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-50813776>.
- 79 The Rwandan Constitution, Chapter IV-Human Rights and Freedoms, Article 38, p.15, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda_2015.pdf?lang=en.
- 80 Kelly Rwamapera, "Rwanda's Supreme Court decriminalizes cartooning, except for president," The Independent, April 25, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.ug/rwandas-supreme-court-decriminalizes-cart...>; Clement Uwiringiyimana, "Rwanda court repeals law banning satirical cartoons," Reuters, April 24, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-rwanda-politics-cartoons/rwanda-cour....>
- 81 "Rwanda court upholds election ban on opposition leader," The Guardian, March 13, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/13/rwanda-victoire-ingabire-....>
- 82 "Article 39, Law on prevention and punishment of cyber crimes," Official Gazette n. Special of 25/09/2018, September 25, 2018, https://www.primature.gov.rw/index.php?id=2&no_cache=1&tx_drblob_pi1%5B....
- 83 "Article 41: Creation or publication of a site for terrorist groups," 127-128, Official Gazette n. Special of 25/09/2018, accessed October 9, 2019, http://minijust.gov.rw/fileadmin/Laws_and_Regulations/Law_on_Cyber_crim...
- 84 Interview with consultant.
- 85 "Article 236: Insults or defamation against the President of the Republic," Official Gazette no. Special of 27/09/2018, accessed October 9, 2019, <http://www.therwandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-New-Rwanda-Pen....>
- 86 "Article 194: Spreading false information or harmful propaganda with intent to cause a hostile international opinion against Rwandan Government," 177, Official Gazette no. Special of 27/09/2018, September 27, 2018, <http://www.therwandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-New-Rwanda-Pen....>

- ⁸⁷"Article 233: Humiliation of national authorities and persons in charge of public service," Official Gazette no. Special of 27/09/2018, September 27, 2018, <http://www.therwandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-New-Rwanda-Pen...>; Abdi Latif Dahir, "Rwanda's new penal code bans cartoons that 'humiliate' public officials," Quartz Africa, October 2, 2018, <https://qz.com/africa/1410418/rwanda-bans-cartoons-that-humiliate-gover....>
- ⁸⁸Jimmy Mafamvula Nkele, "Rwanda Enacts New ICT Regulations," JuriAfrique, December 30, 2016, <http://juriafrique.com/eng/2016/12/30/rwanda-enacts-new-ict-regulations/>.
- ⁸⁹"Articles 60: Improper use of public electronic communication network," Official Gazette n°26 of 27/06/2016, June 27, 2016, http://www.rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/Law_governing_Information_and_Communi....
- ⁹⁰"Law No. 18/2008 of 23/07/2008 Relating to the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Ideology," Droit-Afrique, July 23, 2008, <http://droit-afrique.com/upload/doc/rwanda/Rwanda-Loi-2008-18-repressio...>
- ⁹¹Louis Gitinywa, "A snapshot of Rwanda's genocide law," Pen/Opp, September 22, 2020, September 22, 2020, https://penopp.org/articles/snapshot-rwandas-genocide-law?language_cont....
- ⁹²Rwanda Investtigation Bureau (@RIB_RW), "RIB yafunze Nkundineza Jean Paul, Umunyamakuru wigenga (freelance). Akurikiranyweho ibyaha yakoreye ku murongo wa YouTube birimo gutukana mu ruhame, guhohotera uwatanze amakuru ku byaha no gukoresha ibikangisho," X, October 16, 2023, https://twitter.com/RIB_Rw/status/1714002547025858852.
- ⁹³
- ⁹⁴
- ⁹⁵Tuyishimire Raymond, "Umunyamakuru Honore Umuhiza yongeye gutabwa muri yombi," Umuseke, January 28, 2024, <https://umuseke.rw/2024/01/umunyamakuru-umuhiza-honore-yongeye-gutabwa-....>
- ⁹⁶Tuyishimire Raymond, "RIB Ifunze abashyira kumbuga nkoranya ibiteye isoni," Umuseke, May 9, 2024, <https://umuseke.rw/2024/05/rib-ifunze-abashyira-ku-mbuga-nkoranyambaga-....>
- ⁹⁷"Rwandan YouTube star jailed for 'humiliating' state officials," Al Jazeera, November 12, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/12/rwandan-youtube-star-jailed-f....>

- 98"Rwandan Journalist Dieudonné Niyonsenga says he was beaten, detained in "hole"," Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), January 31, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/01/rwandan-journalist-dieudonne-niyonsenga-says-he...>; "Rwanda: End abuses Against Journalists," Human Rights Watch, January 18, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/18/rwanda-end-abuses-against-journalis...>
- 99"ALLÉGATIONS DE TORTURE SUR UN JOURNALISTE EN DÉTENTION [Allegations of Torture Against a Journalist in Detention]," ACTION DES CHRÉTIENS POUR L'ABOLITION DE LA TORTURE, June 7, 2022, <https://www.acatfrance.fr/appel-a-mobilisation/allegations-de-torture-s...>
- 100"Rwandan Journalist Dieudonné Niyonsenga says he was beaten, detained in "hole"," CPJ, January 31, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/01/rwandan-journalist-dieudonne-niyonsenga-says-he...>; "Rwanda: End abuses Against Journalists," Human Rights Watch, January 18, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/18/rwanda-end-abuses-against-journalis...>
- 101"Rwanda: CFWIJ is Concerned At Yvonne Idamange's Conviction," The Coalition for Women in Journalism, October 1, 2021, <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/rwanda-yvonne-idamanges-c...>
- 102Jean Claude Mwambutsa, "Urukiko rwongereye igihano cyahawe Yvonne Idamange," BBC Gahuza, March 30, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/gahuza/articles/cd177x2mrk2o>.
- 103"Rwanda: Crackdown on opposition, media intensifies," Human Rights Watch, October 13, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/19/rwanda-crackdown-opposition-media-i...>
- 104"Politician Convicted for Harming Rwanda's Image," Human Rights Watch, January 18, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/18/politician-convicted-harming-rwanda...>; "Theoneste Nsengimana," CPJ, last accessed September 13, 2024, <https://cpj.org/data/people/theoneste-nsengimana/>; "Rwanda: criminal prosecution and detention of journalists and human rights defenders Théoneste Nsengimana and Dieudonné Niyonsenga (joint communication)," UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, July 4, 2024, <https://srdefenders.org/rwanda-criminal-prosecution-and-detention-of-jo...>
- 105Rwanda Investigation Bureau (@RIB_rw), "Uyu muni, RIB yafunze Karasira Aimable imukurikiranyeho icyaha cyo guhakana no guha ishingiro jenoside yakorewe abatutsi muri 1994 n'icyaha cyo

gukurura amacakubiri," Twitter, May 31, 2021, https://twitter.com/RIB_Rw/status/1399383672910929920.

- 106 Edmund Kagire, "Karasira to face additional charges," KT Press, June 5, 2021, <https://www.ktpress.rw/2021/06/karasira-to-face-additional-charges/>.
- 107 "Rwanda: Jailed critic denounces torture in prison," Human Rights Watch, June 13, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/13/rwanda-jailed-critic-denounces-tort...>
- 108 Daniel Sabiiti, "Court recommends medical test for Aimable Karasira," KT Press, April 7, 2023, <https://www.ktpress.rw/2023/04/court-recommends-medical-test-for-aimabl...>
- 109 "Legal shifts in Aimable Karasira's trial: Defence Lawyer withdraws," The Rwandan, May 8, 2024, <https://www.therwandan.com/legal-shifts-in-aimable-karasiras-trial-defe...>
- 110 "Rwanda Flags Off SIM Card Registration Exercise," Chimp Reports, February 4, 2013, <https://chimpreports.com/8072-rwanda-flags-off-sim-card-registration-ex...>; Mann, L., & Berry, M. (2016). Understanding the political motivations that shape Rwanda's emergent developmental state. *New Political Economy*, 21(1), 119-144; and Mann, L. (2018). Left to other peoples' devices? A political economy perspective on the big data revolution in development. *Development and Change*, 49(1), 3-36.
- 111 "Regulations on SIM Card Registration," Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency, January 16, 2013, http://www.rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/Board_Decisions/FINAL_SIM_CARD_REGIST...
- 112 Magnus Mazimpaka, "Deadline: 24 Hours Left To SIM Card Registration, Here Is How To Do It," Taarifa, January 29, 2019, <https://taarifa.rw/deadline-24-hours-left-for-sim-card-registration-her...>; Collins Mwai, "Rwanda: RURA Clarifies New Simcard Regulations," AllAfrica, January 21, 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201901210058.html>.
- 113 Fred K. Nkusi, "New ICT law embodies data privacy protection," The New Times, January 13, 2017, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/207958>.
- 114 "Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Rwanda by ARTICLE 19 and Access Now," Article19, July 9, 2020, <https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Rwanda-UPR-Submiss...>

- 115 "Rwanda: Repression Across Borders," Human Rights Watch, January 28, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/28/rwanda-repression-across-borders>; Michela Wrong, "Suspects in murder of ex-Rwandan spy chief 'directly linked to Kigali' – inquest", The Guardian, April 18, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/18/south-africa-interfered-i....>
- 116 Phineas Rueckert, Karine Pfenniger, and Florian Reynaud "Pegasus in Rwanda: Sister of presidential candidate, high-ranking Rwandan politicians added to spyware list," Forbidden Stories, May 28, 2024, <https://forbiddenstories.org/pegasus-in-rwanda-sister-of-presidential-c....>
- 117 "Pegasus Project: Rwandan authorities chose thousands of activists, journalists and politicians to target with NSO spyware," Amnesty International, July 19, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/rwandan-authori....>
- 118 Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Paul Lewis, David Pegg, Sam Cutler, Nina Lakhani and Michael Safi, "Revealed: leak uncovers global abuse of cyber-surveillance weapon," The Guardian, July 18, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/18/revealed-leak-uncovers-gl...>; "Response from NSO and governments," The Guardian, July 20, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/jul/18/response-from-nso-and-gove....>
- 119 Phineas Rueckert, Karine Pfenniger, and Florian Reynaud "Pegasus in Rwanda: Sister of presidential candidate, high-ranking Rwandan politicians added to spyware list," Forbidden Stories, May 28, 2024, <https://forbiddenstories.org/pegasus-in-rwanda-sister-of-presidential-c....>
- 120 Financial Times, "Inside the WhatsApp hack: how an Israel technology was used to spy", <https://www.ft.com/content/d9127eae-f99d-11e9-98fd-4d6c20050229>; Nate Schenkkan and Isabel Linzer, "Rwanda: Transnational Repression Case Study," Freedom House, February 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/rwanda>.
- 121 Florian Reynaud and Phineas Rueckert, "Rwandan regime used Pegasus spyware on opponents and allies for years", Le Monde, May 29, 2024, <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/05/29/opponents-an....>
- 122 Amos Khaemba, "Details behind the death of Anne Rwigara, Paul Kagame's nemesis," Tuko, December 28, 2023, <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/africa/kenya/details-behind-the-death-of-anne...>; "Rwanda: Urupfu rwa Anne Rwigara - "Ni amayobera

gusa" – umubyeyi we Adeline," BBC Gahuza, December 28, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/gahuza/articles/c16ynwe7p68o>.

- ¹²³Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Jason Burke, "Rwandan dissidents suspect Paul Rusesabagina was under surveillance," September 3, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/03/rwanda-dissidents-suspect...>; Ignatius Ssuuna, "'Hotel Rwanda' hero arrested on terror charges, say police," Washington Post, August 31, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/hotel-rwanda-hero-arrested-....>
- ¹²⁴"Pegasus: Daughter of the 'Hotel Rwanda' hero apparently spied on," The Limited Times, July 20, 2021, <https://newsrnd.com/news/2021-07-20-pegasus--daughter-of-the-%22hotel-r....>
- ¹²⁵"Israeli Spy Tech Used Against Daughter of Man Who Inspired 'Hotel Rwanda,'" OCCRP, July 19, 2021, <https://www.occrp.org/en/the-pegasus-project/israeli-spy-tech-used-agai...>; Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Diana Taylor, "Nephew of Jailed Hotel Rwanda Dissident Hacked by NSO Spyware," The Guardian, July 18, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/18/nephew-of-jailed-hotel-rw....>
- ¹²⁶TOI Staff, "Rwanda believed to have used NSO spyware against Belgian journalist, wife," The Times of Israel, September 19, 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rwanda-believed-to-have-used-nso-spyware-...>; Carlos Mureithi and Kira Zalan, "Rwanda Fed False Intelligence to the US and Interpol As It Pursued Political Dissidents Abroad," The Elephant, November 4, 2022, <https://www.theelephant.info/features/2022/11/04/rwanda-fed-false-intel...>
- ¹²⁷Mehul Srivastava and Tom Wilson, "Inside the WhatsApp hack: how an Israeli technology was used to spy," Financial Times, October 29, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/d9127eae-f99d-11e9-98fd-4d6c20050229>.
- ¹²⁸Eugene Kwibuka, "How the new law on criminal procedure will boost graft fight," The New Times, January 9, 2018, <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/criminal-law-graft-fight>.
- ¹²⁹Nasra Bishumba, "New penal code to sanction institution for genocide crime," The New Times, October 7, 2018, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/new-penal-code-sanction-institutions-ge...>; Lynsey Chuttel & Abdi Latif Dahir, "Rwanda opposition figure killed in South Africa," The New York Times, February 22, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/22/world/africa/rwanda-seif-bamporiki-k....>

- 130"Law Relating to the Interception of Communications, Article 6: Persons authorized to apply for an interception warrant," Official Gazette n° 41 of 14/10/2013, November 14, 2013, <https://perma.cc/LU73-ZC29>.
- 131"Law Relating to the Interception of Communications, Article 12: Inspection," Official Gazette n° 41 of 14/10/2013, November 14, 2013, <https://perma.cc/LU73-ZC29>.
- 132"State of Internet Freedom in Rwanda 2014," CIPESA, May 2014, http://www.cipesa.org/?wpfb_dl=179.
- 133"The Inclusive Internet: Index 2022," The Economist, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://impact.economist.com/projects/inclusive-internet-index/2022/cou...>
- 134"Rwanda: Data protection law published in official gazette," dataguidance.com, October 18, 2021, <https://www.dataguidance.com/news/rwanda-data-protection-law-published-....>
- 135"DRAFT LAW N° OF RELATING TO PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY," May 6, 2021, https://www.dataguidance.com/sites/default/files/rwanda_data_protection...; Chamber of Deputies | Rwanda (@RwandaCDeputies), "Today, the Plenary Sitting of the Chamber of Deputies adopted the relevance of the draft law relating to personal data protection and privacy," Twitter, May 6, 2021, <https://twitter.com/RwandaCDeputies/status/1390333221720707077>.
- 136"Rwanda: Draft data protection bill must incorporate freedom of expression and information safeguards," ARTICLE 19, June 15, 2021, <https://www.article19.org/resources/rwanda-data-protection-bill-must-in...>
- 137MTN Rwanda, „Cybersecurity Awareness Month," LinkedIn, November 2023, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mtn-rwanda_cybersecurityawarenessmonth-t...
- 138"Law Relating to the Interception of Communications, Article 7: Requirement for a communication service provider," Official Gazette n° 41 of 14/10/2013, November 14, 2013, <https://perma.cc/LU73-ZC29>.
- 139Interview with a staff member of a major telecommunications company active in Rwanda, February 2015.
- 140"Rwanda: Repression Across Borders," Human Rights Watch, January 28, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/28/rwanda-repression-across-borders#>; "World Report 2023: Rwanda," Human Rights Watch, accessed September 22,

2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/rwanda>.

- 141 "Rwanda: criminal prosecution and detention of journalists and human rights defenders Théoneste Nsengimana and Dieudonné Niyonsenga (joint communication)," UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, July 4, 2024, <https://srdefenders.org/rwanda-criminal-prosecution-and-detention-of-jo...>
- 142 "Rwandan Journalist Dieudonné Niyonsenga says he was beaten, detained in "hole"," Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), January 31, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/01/rwandan-journalist-dieudonne-niyonsenga-says-he...>
- 143 "Rwanda: criminal prosecution and detention of journalists and human rights defenders Théoneste Nsengimana and Dieudonné Niyonsenga (joint communication)," UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, July 4, 2024, <https://srdefenders.org/rwanda-criminal-prosecution-and-detention-of-jo...>
- 144 "Rwanda: Jailed Critic Denounces Torture in Prison," Human Rights Watch, June 13, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/13/rwanda-jailed-critic-denounces-tort...>
- 145 "Rwanda: Ensure Independent Investigation into John Williams Ntwali's death," Human Rights Watch, January 31, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/31/rwanda-ensure-independent-investiga...>; Caroline Kimeu, "Suspicious Death of Rwanda Journalist Prompts calls for Investigation," The Guardian, January 31, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/jan/31/suspicious-d...>
- 146 "Death of John Williams Ntwali: after a questionable trial, new calls for an independent enquiry," International Federation for Human Rights, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/rwanda/death-of-john-williams-ntw...>
- 147 Reliou Koubakin, "Disparition d'un journaliste critique du pouvoir au Rwanda," February 16, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/fr/rwanda-journaliste-disparu-critique/a-64733423>
- 148 "Rwanda: Kuburirwa irengero kw'abantu ,ntakirahinduka," BBC Gahuza, August 30, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/gahuza/articles/cd1n2dem4zno>.
- 149 Cécile Andrzejewski, "Soldiers fallen in silence: Kagame's unacknowledged war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, " Forbidden Stories, May 28, 2024, <https://forbiddenstories.org/soldiers-fallen-in-silence-kagames-unackno...>

- [150](#)Nkusi Uwimana Agnes (@agnes_nkusi), "After 23 years of journalism in Rwanda and 5 years in prison in Kigali, I denounced human rights violations by the RPF. Threatened on 05/03/2024, I fled to a neighboring country where I am in danger. I call for international aid and protection. #CPJ #HumanRights #RSF," X, June 21, 2024, https://x.com/agnes_nkusi/status/1804183157677195362.
- [151](#)Nkusi Uwimana Agnes (@agnes_nkusi), "Le 20 mai 2024, j'ai reçu des informations indiquant que les agences de renseignement du Rwanda avaient envoyé des personnes chargées de me tuer ou de m'enlever là où je me suis réfugiée . Ma sécurité est en danger ! #HRW #RSF #CPJ_Africa #Amnesty #UNHCR," X, June 23, 2024, https://x.com/agnes_nkusi/status/1804859923001450606.
- [152](#)"RIB Yatumije Umunyamakuru Jean Paul Nkundineza," Taarifa, October 16, 2023, <https://kiny.taarifa.rw/rib-yatumije-umunyamakuru-jean-paul-nkundineza/>.
- [153](#)"World Report 2022: Rwanda," Human Rights Watch, accessed April 25, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/rwanda>; Cadre de Concertation de la Société Civile Rwandaise (CCSCR), "Let us condemn the harassment of Aimable U. Karasira, teacher at the University of Rwanda," Change.org, August 4, 2020, <https://www.change.org/p/paul-kagame-let-us-condemn-the-harassment-of-a...>
- [154](#)"As Controversial As YouTube Has Become in Rwanda, It Is a Cash Cow For Many," Chronicles, March 5, 2021, <https://www.chronicles.rw/2021/03/05/as-controversial-as-youtube-has-be...>
- [155](#)
- [156](#)"Rwanda: Follow up open letter to Rwanda President Paul Kagame", PEN, April 26, 2022, <https://www.pen-international.org/news/rwanda-follow-up-open-letter-to-...>
- [157](#)NDAHIRO Valens Papy (@NdahiroPapy), "#RwOT Ndifuza kumenya Hari ibwiriza Cyangwa Itegeko ryahawe urwego rwa Dasso Ryo Gukubita itangazamakuru Cyangwa kurimenagurira ibikoresho ? Ribaye rihari mumbwire Cyangwa se hatangwe ubutabera aho Dasso Iduhohoteye mukarere @KicukiroDistr," X, March 12, 2024, <https://twitter.com/NdahiroPapy/status/1767512993112129721>; Tuyishimire Raymond, "Kigali : Dasso iravugwaho gukomeretsa umunyamakuru," Umuseke, March 12, 2024, <https://umuseke.rw/2024/03/kigali-dasso-iravugwaho-gukomeretsa-umunyama...>
- [158](#)"Rwanda's media self-regulator subjected to intimidation campaign," Reporters without Borders, November 7, 2014, <https://rsf.org/en/news/rwandas-media-self-regulator-subjected-intimida...>; Tom Rhodes, "Twitter war shines light on how

Rwanda intimidates press," Committee to Protect Journalists, March 24, 2014, <https://cpj.org/x/59d6>.

- 159"Journalist Michela Wrong exposes intimidation tactics used by Rwanda's regime supporters," The Rwandan, June 9, 2023, <https://www.therwandan.com/journalist-michela-wrong-exposes-intimidatio...>
- 160Phineas Rueckert and Karine Pfenniger, "In the West and online, Rwanda's influence machine keeps churning," Forbidden Stories, May 28, 2024, <https://forbiddenstories.org/in-the-west-and-online-rwandas-influence-m...>
- 161"PRESS RELEASE: Senate to conduct a campaign on its Genocide denial research findings," Republic of Rwanda Parliament-Senate, January 1, 2020, https://www.parliament.gov.rw/index.php?id=32&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=204...; "The Structure of Genocide Denial and Demonstration Tutsis in Foreign Countries and Strategies Against It," Republic of Rwanda Parliament-Senate, 2019, https://www.parliament.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/importa nt_documents...
- 162Edwin Musoni, "Kigali meet calls for tougher actions against cybercrime," New Times, July 18, 2022, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/201343/News/kigali-meet-calls-for-to...>
- 163Jean De La Croix Tabaro, "Rwanda inaugurate Regional cyber-crime investigation centre," KT Press, October 7, 2023, <https://www.ktpress.rw/2023/10/rwanda-inaugurates-regional-cyber-crime-....>
- 164"Government Data Center Goes Down, President's Website Off," Taarifa, February 18, 2020, <https://taarifa.rw/government-data-center-goes-down-presidents-website-...>; Alex Alley, "Rwandan Government data center offline after cyber attack," February 27, 2020, <https://www.datacenterdynamics.com/en/news/rwandan-government-data-cent...>

ecoi.net description:

Report on digital media and internet freedom (reporting period June 2023 - May 2024)

Country:
Rwanda

Source:
[Freedom House](#) (Author)

Published:
16 October 2024

Original link:
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-net/2024>

Document type:
Periodical Report

Language:
English

Available on ecoi.net since:
23 October 2024

Document ID:
2116583

Austrian Red Cross Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)	Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien T +43 1 589 00 583 F +43 1 589 00 589 info@ecoi.net	Contact Imprint & Disclaimer F.A.Q. Data Protection Notice
--	---	---

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

