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HRW – Human Rights Watch (Author)

Two More Journalists Arrested in Rwanda

Investigations Relate to Reporting on Kigali's Worst Kept Secret

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Two journalists affiliated with the YouTube channel [Imbarutso ya Demokarasi](#) are facing charges for reporting on Kwa Kabuga or the Kigali Transit Center, an unofficial detention facility where authorities hold people deemed “undesirable,” and one of the capital’s [worst kept secrets](#).

Augustin Nsanzimana, a cameraman and editor, and Emmanuel Niyonshuti, a broadcast journalist, are currently being held in pre-trial detention, which was confirmed by a judge on June 2. At a May 26 court hearing, the prosecution accused the two of “publish[ing] rumors that may incite fear,” a criminal offense vague enough to be used to suppress criticism.

During the hearing their lawyers said the defendants were denied access to counsel for the first six days of detention.

Nsanzimana [reportedly sent a message](#) to contacts on May 1 stating that agents he believed to be from the Rwanda Investigation Bureau had entered his home in Kigali. Niyonshuti also stopped responding to calls and messages shortly [after reporting threats](#). The Rwanda Investigation Bureau spokesperson [confirmed](#) 72 hours later that the two were in their custody. The arrests followed the publication on YouTube of a [video](#) alleging detainee deaths inside Kwa Kabuga. Human Rights Watch has [documented](#) arbitrary detention and serious ill treatment in Kwa Kabuga, where homeless people, sex workers, street children, street vendors, and others are often held without due process.

The detentions are part of an ongoing crackdown on free speech: [reporting on public service failures](#), [providing space for opposition voices](#), including those linked to [detained opposition figure Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya](#), or [questioning government narratives](#) often result in punishment.

In May, Aimable Karasira, who was convicted on charges including “divisionism,” [died on the day](#) of his scheduled release from prison under questionable circumstances. Karasira, an academic and YouTuber, was arrested in 2021 after speaking publicly about losing relatives at the hands of both genocide perpetrators and the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front in 1994. Before his arrest, he told me: “I wanted to use YouTube to tell my story.”

More than a dozen journalists, commentators, and opposition activists [remain imprisoned](#) in Rwanda, many following prosecutions for speaking out on YouTube against abuse. All those jailed unjustly should be immediately and unconditionally released, and the abusive legal framework that allowed their prosecution should be reformed in line with international free speech standards.

Associated documents

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Rwanda

2 journalists arrested for reporting on unofficial detention facility in Kigali

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