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## Freedom on the Net 2018 - Rwanda

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**Status:** Partly Free  
**Total Score:** 55/100 (0 = Best, 100 = Worst)  
**Population:** 12,208,407  
**Social Media/ICT Apps Blocked:** No  
**Political/Social Content Blocked:** Yes  
**Bloggers/ICT Users Arrested:** Yes  
**Freedom in the World Status:** Not Free

### Key Developments, June 1, 2017 – May 31, 2018

- Paul Kagame won a third presidential term with 98 percent of the vote in August 2017 (see Introduction).
- The lead-up to presidential elections in August 2017 saw a proliferation of progovernment commentators attacking opposition candidates and critics online (see Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation).
- In March 2018, blogger Joseph Nkusi was sentenced to ten years in prison for incitement to civil disobedience and the spread of rumors (see Prosecutions and Arrests for Online Activities).
- Private WhatsApp messages were used as evidence to prosecute opposition presidential candidate Diane Rwigara for alleged incitement against the government (see Prosecutions and Arrests for Online Activities).

### Introduction:

As Rwandans geared up for the September 2018 parliamentary elections, internet freedom declined due to numerous legal restrictions placed on online speech, the growing prevalence of government trolls manipulating online content, and harassment and attacks against online journalists and human rights defenders.

While Rwanda has made remarkable progress in its economic and ICT development, the government continued to restrict freedom of speech and political activity under the pretext of maintaining stability in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide that claimed over 1,000,000 lives. President Paul Kagame's repressive government has crippled independent civil society and journalism, both in traditional media and online. Pro-government views dominate domestic media, while the authorities work quickly to censor critical viewpoints, resulting in an information environment that projects a single narrative of unity, peace, and progress. Unlawful secretive detentions, torture, and even extralegal killings of citizens for their critical viewpoints often go unreported.

Paul Kagame won a third presidential term with 98 percent of the vote in August 2017. During the campaign period, authorities cracked down heavily on opposition figures and arrested the only presidential candidate who attempted to run against Kagame, Diane Rwigara, along with her mother and sister. Online content manipulation became more prevalent with the proliferation of government trolls that attacked opposition candidates and critics on social media.

In March 2018, a court sentenced blogger Joseph Nkusi to ten years in prison for incitement to civil disobedience and the spread of rumors. In 2016, Nkusi, who had lived in Norway since 2009, was deported following the rejection of his asylum application. Upon his return to Rwanda, he was immediately arrested and questioned about his political activities and blog postings, which were known for their sharp criticism of the Rwandan government. The president signed revisions to the penal code into law in August 2018 that increases penalties for criminal defamation, with prison sentences of five to seven years for defamation against the president, among other new penalties.

The government blocked some Ugandan websites as a result of diplomatic tensions between the two countries. Ugandan authorities accused Rwanda of spying and destabilizing their country, while the Rwandan government complained that its citizens were being illegally arrested and tortured by Uganda's security forces.

### Obstacles to Access:

*Rwanda continued making strides in expanding internet access and improving affordability.*

#### *Availability and Ease of Access*

Access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Rwanda has improved notably in recent years. The government has invested in building its internet infrastructure and other ICTs in its effort to develop a robust information economy. According to a March

2018 report by the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA), the sector regulator, internet penetration has reached 47.8 percent.<sup>[1]</sup> Estimates from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) were lower, at 20 percent penetration in 2017.<sup>[2]</sup> ITU also reported that 70 percent of the population had mobile subscriptions in 2017, while 20 percent had active mobile-broadband subscriptions.

Government investments in broadband technology across the country continued to grow, as well as access to electricity via hydropower and solar energy projects, which have helped improve connection speeds and decrease costs. According to Akamai's *State of the Internet* report, Rwanda's average internet connection speed was 7.7 Mbps in 2017, above the global average of 7.0 Mbps.<sup>[3]</sup> Access has also become more affordable. The Alliance for Affordable Internet ranked Rwanda as the 8th most affordable internet environment among 37 developing countries in 2017.<sup>[4]</sup> However, limited fixed-line infrastructure and high prices have negatively impacted internet access. Nevertheless, developments in the fixed network market have improved connectivity and reliability. Operators have rolled out national fiber-optic backbone networks to connect to the international submarine fiber-optic cables on the east coast of Africa. The cables have provided the entire region with fiber-based international bandwidth for the first time, ending the dependency on satellites. In 2017, Liquid Telecom continued to expand its fiber to the premises (FTTP) services in Kigali and some small towns.<sup>[5]</sup>

In 2013, the government signed a deal with Korea Telecom Rwanda Network (KTRN) to provide internet service to 95 percent of the population.<sup>[6]</sup> KTRN is a wholesale provider of the universal mobile broadband network built on 4G LTE technology. By 2016, the number of subscribers on LTE infrastructure had increased by 200 percent.<sup>[7]</sup>

According to the Rwanda Development Board, Rwanda continues to be one of the fastest growing African countries in ICTs, possessing several avenues for growth for the ICT sector – from e-commerce to app development to automation. The country has strived to become a regional training center for quality ICT professionals and research, fostering a robust ICT industry to create local jobs and foster entrepreneurship.

Nonetheless, poverty continues to be the primary impediment to ICT uptake, especially the internet, with the majority of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture. Internet access is concentrated primarily in Kigali and remains beyond the reach of many citizens, particularly those in rural areas who are limited by low income and low levels of ICT awareness.<sup>[8]</sup> Only 11 percent of Rwandans are ICT literate,<sup>[9]</sup> and over 70 percent of the population speaks only Kinyarwanda, making internet content in English inaccessible to the majority of Rwandans.<sup>[10]</sup> According to USAID, 41 percent of the population has access to electricity, which falls short of the government's ambitious plan to achieve 70 percent electrification by 2018.<sup>[11]</sup>

### *Restrictions on Connectivity*

There were no restrictions on connectivity reported in Rwanda during the coverage period, though Article 52 of the 2001 Law Governing Telecommunications gives the government 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."<sup>[12]</sup> Furthermore, the government has some control over the country's internet infrastructure. The ITU has characterized the level of competition for Rwanda's international gateway as "partial."<sup>[13]</sup>

The local internet exchange point (IXP), the Rwanda Internet Exchange (RINEX),<sup>[14]</sup> is managed by the Rwanda Information & Communications Technology Association, a nonprofit comprised of ICT institutions and professionals.<sup>[15]</sup> As of mid-2016, five of Rwanda's nine internet services providers (ISPs) exchange internet traffic through RINEX, and ISPs can also opt to connect via RINEX to the international internet.<sup>[16]</sup>

### *ICT Market*

Following market liberalization policies implemented in 2001,<sup>[17]</sup> Rwanda's ICT market has been vibrant and competitive, with no reported interference from the government during the period of study. However, according to local sources, government officials and agencies have shares in some telecom companies, which may enable the state to interfere in their operations at will.<sup>[18]</sup> As of March 2018, there were two main mobile telecom operators: MTN and Airtel; as of February 2018, there were 20 licensed ISPs.<sup>[19]</sup>

### *Regulatory Bodies*

The Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) oversees the regulatory aspects of ICT infrastructure rollout and operations by telecommunications operators.<sup>[20]</sup> Officially, RURA has administrative and financial autonomy, but reports to the Office of the Prime Minister.<sup>[21]</sup> The government audits RURA's budget, while the president nominates its seven board members, supervisory board, and director general, who all work under executive oversight, which limits their autonomy in practice.<sup>[22]</sup>

Recent appointments to RURA have raised concerns about the influence of the military and intelligence services on the regulation of the ICT sector.<sup>[23]</sup> Patrick Nyirishema, a senior military officer, is currently the director general of RURA.<sup>[24]</sup> Nyirishema succeeded another senior military officer, Major François-Régis Gatarayiha, who was appointed permanent secretary in the Ministry of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in September 2017. The ICT Ministry oversees the sector on the policy implementation level. A former head of Rwanda Interpol and the Criminal Investigation Department, Anthony Kulamba, was recently appointed the head of media regulation and consumer affairs at RURA.<sup>[25]</sup>

### **Limits on Content:**

*Censorship of online content remained high, with a number of independent online media outlets still blocked in the country. In the lead-up to the August 2017 elections, progovernment commentators attacking opposition candidates on social media increased notably.*

## Blocking and Filtering

The government restricts the types of online content that users can access, particularly content that strays from the government's official line. In 2017 and 2018, numerous independent news outlets and opposition blogs that have been blocked for years remained inaccessible, including the websites of *Inyenyeri News*, *The Rwandan*, and *Le Prophete*.<sup>[26]</sup> Independent regional news outlets such as *Great Lakes Voice* and websites of the Rwandan diaspora such as *Rugali* are also blocked and only accessible via web proxy. There is no transparency behind the government's blocking decisions and no avenue for appeal.

As of mid-2018, the previously blocked news website *Ireme News* was accessible, but visiting the site yielded a generic page from its web host, justhost.com.<sup>[27]</sup> According to local sources, the outlet's owner, William Ntwali, had negotiated with the government to unblock the site, but refused to pay the web hosting fees until the government granted him the right to resume operations in the country.<sup>[28]</sup> The BBC Kinyarwanda/Kirundi website remained inaccessible despite the government announcement in May 2015 that only the BBC's Kinyarwanda radio service was suspended.

Social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter; and communications apps like WhatsApp, are freely available. International news sources, some of which are critical of the Rwandan government, are also available online. These websites most likely remain unblocked because most Rwandans engage with content in the local language, Kinyarwanda.

However, the websites of several Ugandan news outlets were blocked in the wake of diplomatic tensions between the two countries. The website of SoftPower News, a Ugandan digital media company, remained blocked in Rwanda as of March 2018. Both governments, through state-sponsored media houses, accused one another of acts of espionage and intent to undermine state security. In July 2018, the Rwandan government wrote a protest note to the Ugandan government condemning what it called "multiple unjustified arrests" of its citizens in Uganda without informing its High Commission in Kampala.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Content Removal

The extent to which the government forces websites to delete content is unknown, though anecdotal incidents in recent years suggest that it happens frequently. Similar to the restrictive traditional media environment, editors of online news sites often receive calls from the authorities with demands to delete content that is critical of government officials.<sup>[30]</sup> According to journalists interviewed anonymously, authorities regularly order editors to remove critical stories from online outlets or face blocking.<sup>[31]</sup> Local journalists refer to the practice as "kunyonga," which means "shooting down anonymously."

Credible sources claim that the Office of the Government's Spokesperson (OGS), Rwanda's propaganda office, has administrative access to the websites of some nominally independent newspapers. Government employees regularly remove stories deemed to be critical of the Kagame administration.

In May 2017, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) established new regulations requiring all candidates for the 2017 presidential election to seek approval for campaign messages they planned to post online, which the NEC executive secretary claimed was necessary to ensure that social media messages were not "poisoning the minds" of Rwandans.<sup>[32]</sup> Strong criticism within Rwanda, amplified by high-profile attention in the international media, led the NEC to reverse its decision in June 2017.<sup>[33]</sup> If implemented, the regulation would have allowed the NEC to censor any campaign message it disagrees with, or which is critical of the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) party, essentially restricting political speech during the election period. Candidates would have been required to submit their online campaign messages to a team set up by the NEC 24 hours before they planned to publish the post.

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.<sup>[34]</sup> Nonetheless, service providers are required to remove content when handed a takedown notice, and there are no avenues for appeal.

## Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation

Government repression of the media greatly limits the diversity of the information landscape, both online and offline. Critical and independent online news produced by opposition supporters overseas – mainly in Europe, the United States, and South Africa – are blocked in Rwanda. Few Rwandans are aware of this practice, though savvy journalists seeking independent sources of information report using proxy servers to access critical information.<sup>[35]</sup> However, independent outlets face economic challenges in comparison to their state-run counterparts, which receive income from government advertisements and direct subsidies.<sup>[36]</sup> Large businesses only advertise with state-owned or progovernment media outlets based on an unspoken rule.

While Rwandans are active on Facebook and Twitter, which have become popular with the rise of internet-enabled mobile phone use, self-censorship has become more pervasive among both online journalists and ordinary users due to increasing government repression, social pressure to toe the government line, and fear of reprisals. National security is frequently the basis on which the authorities censor the media, and fear of prosecution contributes to a climate of self-censorship. Internet users typically avoid topics that can be construed as critical of the government or disruptive to national unity and reconciliation.<sup>[37]</sup>

When online journalists try to push the boundaries, their editors frequently contend with editorial interference by security officials and other government authorities who impose redlines that limit what can be published.<sup>[38]</sup> Journalists say editorial decisions are heavily influenced by government forces – including police officers, army officers, and powerful leaders – whose demands are colloquially known as "I say this." According to journalists interviewed anonymously, security officials often check journalists' stories and photos before they are published to ensure they toe the government line. For example, during the 2017 presidential campaign, editors of *Igihe*, an online news outlet, were not allowed to publish articles on candidates that were challenging President Kagame, two sources confirmed. Another 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.

Online content manipulation has been a persistent issue in Rwanda over the years. Social media accounts with government affiliations regularly debate and harass individuals who post online comments considered critical of the government.<sup>[39]</sup> Progovernment accounts also mobilize to retweet and post positive comments in response to President Kagame's tweets to project an image of widespread support. Through Itorero, a state-run traditional school of values, the government has mobilized social media users to counter the views of individuals deemed to be "enemies of the state." The so-called "Twitter Army" has systematically attacked and discredited individuals and media outlets that are critical of the government. According to local sources, these social media users are rewarded for their attacks with access to jobs at government institutions and private companies that have ties to the ruling party. One source said that intelligence services monitor and report social media users who engage constructively with government critics.

### *Digital Activism*

Digital activism over political and social issues is not common in Rwanda. Radio and television call-in programs were once a positive outlet for citizens with mobile phones to anonymously voice critical political or social viewpoints. However, given SIM card registration requirements, users have become reluctant to participate in critical or sensitive discussions out of fear of being identified.

### **Violations of User Rights:**

*The president signed into law revisions to the penal code in August 2018 that increases penalties for criminal defamation, with prison sentences of five to seven years for defamation against the president, among other increased penalties. Blogger Joseph Nkusi was sentenced to ten years in prison for incitement to civil disobedience and the spread of rumors.*

### *Legal Environment*

Rwanda's legal framework is used to restrict fundamental rights to freedom of expression, despite constitutional protections. Compounding the restrictions, the Rwandan judiciary is not independent, and many journalists view the threat of imprisonment as a key constraint on their work.

A new ICT law enacted in June 2016 – known as Law N°24/2016 of 18/06/2016 Governing Information and Communication Technologies published in Official Gazette n°26 of 27/06/2016 – created a new legal and regulatory framework for the ICT sector and codified specific restrictions on internet activities that are antithetical to internet freedom.<sup>[40]</sup> 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."<sup>[41]</sup> Violations are punished in accordance with the penal code.

Defamation of the president or other public officials is criminal offense in Rwanda. Revisions to the penal code signed into law in August 2018 imposes penalties of five to seven years in prison for defamation against the president.<sup>[42]</sup> The new penal code also penalizes the "humiliation of national authorities," including through cartoons, with one to two years in prison and fines.<sup>[43]</sup>

Many other provisions in the revised penal code contain undue restrictions on freedom of expression and are vaguely worded; these provisions likely apply to expression online. 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 ten years in prison in peacetime and life imprisonment during wartime.<sup>[44]</sup>

The law against "genocide ideology" – amended in October 2013 – also threatens freedom of expression both online and off, prescribing heavy prison sentences of up to nine years and fines for any offender " . . . who disseminates genocide ideology in public through documents, speeches, pictures, media or any other means." <sup>[45]</sup> A law passed by the government in July 2018 punishes cartoonists with up to two years in prison for drawing cartoons that ridicule government and military officials, though it remains unclear whether the law will apply to the online dissemination of cartoons.<sup>[46]</sup>

### *Prosecutions and Detentions for Online Activities*

Citizens and journalists are periodically arrested for online activities in Rwanda, though the high degree of self-censorship practiced by online journalists and ordinary users alike has resulted in fewer incidents in the recent past. Cases may also be underreported, given the government's strict controls of the media. During the coverage period, at least one prison sentence for online activities was reported.

In March 2018, a court sentenced blogger Joseph Nkusi to ten years in prison for incitement to civil disobedience and the spread of rumors. In 2016, Nkusi, who had lived in Norway since 2009, was deported following the rejection of his asylum application. Upon his return to Rwanda, he was immediately arrested and questioned about his political activities and blog postings, which were known for their sharp criticism of the Rwandan government. Nkusi had also reportedly founded a radical opposition group while living in exile in Norway and made false claims about the 1994 genocide, which is illegal under Rwanda's law against "genocide ideology."<sup>[47]</sup> He had written that both Hutus and Tutsis were targeted in a "double genocide."<sup>[48]</sup>

The authorities have used the private communications on mobile chat apps as evidence in prosecutions of dissidents, heightening concerns about the government's ability to intercept communications on social media platforms. In September 2017, a few months after announcing her presidential election bid for the 2017 polls, Diane Rwigara was arrested, along with her mother Adeline and sister Anne, for alleged tax evasion and incitement against the government.<sup>[49]</sup> Rwigara had been disqualified from running in the election in July 2017, with the government claiming that signatures on her petition were forged.<sup>[50]</sup> Anne Rwigara was eventually released, while Diane and Adeline Rwigara were eventually released on bail in October 2018.<sup>[51]</sup> At a pretrial hearing in October 2017, prosecutors presented WhatsApp audio messages allegedly taken from the mobile phones of Diane and Adeline as evidence against them.<sup>[52]</sup> The defendants had asked the judge to disregard the Whatsapp audio files as evidence, citing that they were obtained through phone interceptions.<sup>[53]</sup>

In December 2016, Shyaka Kanuma, a veteran journalist and proprietor of the independent *Rwanda Focus* outlet, was arrested for tax evasion and illegal procurement, charges that observers believed were trumped up. Kanuma's arrest came a few days after he announced on social media that he had decided to quit journalism for peaceful political and social activism, a decision he attributed to frequent police harassment.<sup>[54]</sup> In a Facebook post prior to his arrest, he had recounted "invitations" to explain himself to the head of National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) followed by frequent visits to the Criminal Investigations Department for questioning.<sup>[55]</sup> Kanuma was released in January 2018 after serving a one-year prison sentence.<sup>[56]</sup>

### *Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity*

The sophistication of the Rwandan authorities' surveillance capabilities is unknown, but there is a strong sense that surveillance is pervasive. The government closely monitors social media discussions, as evidenced by the prevalence of pro-government commentators (see "Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation"). Exiled dissidents have been attacked and murdered, despite their efforts to protect their identities, following threats from individuals inside or associated with the government.<sup>[57]</sup>

In 2018, interviews with anonymous local sources confirmed that government representatives are systematically embedded within the operations of telecom companies for the purposes of surveillance. Telecom technicians are also known to routinely intercept communications on behalf of the military.

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 potential threats to "public security."<sup>[58]</sup> Under the amendments, communications service providers are required to ensure that their systems have the technical capability to intercept communications upon demand, though security officials also have the power to "intercept communications using equipment that is not facilitated by communication service providers," which de facto allows the authorities to hack into a telecommunications network without a provider's knowledge or assistance.<sup>[59]</sup> 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 also 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.<sup>[60]</sup> There is no requirement to justify surveillance as necessary and proportionate to a legitimate aim.<sup>[61]</sup>

In July 2018, the government passed a law that extends the powers of interception to a civilian institution, the Office of the Ombudsman, to investigate corruption-related crimes.<sup>[62]</sup> Previously, interception powers were only held by security agencies such as the police, military, and intelligence services; the law was vague about whose communications could be intercepted. The interception of communications without the prior authorization of a judge is still legally permissible.

In July 2015, email leaks from the Italian surveillance firm Hacking Team revealed that the government attempted to purchase sophisticated spyware known as Remote Control System (RCS) in 2012.<sup>[63]</sup> While the leaked emails did not confirm that a sale took place, they illustrate the government interest in acquiring technology that can monitor and intercept user communications.

The ability to communicate anonymously is compromised by mandatory SIM card registration requirements in place since 2013.<sup>[64]</sup> Under the regulation establishing SIM card registration, the ICT regulator RURA has unfettered access to SIM card databases managed by operators, while other "authorized" individuals or institutions may also be granted access.<sup>[65]</sup>

In July 2018, RURA revised its regulations on SIM card registration, ostensibly to tackle fraud, including SIM boxing, identity theft, and phishing.<sup>[66]</sup> Individuals now have to present identification to receive a SIM card. Critics argue that the new regulations are 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 a comprehensive data protection law. A data protection provision is included in the new ICT law passed in 2016, but it is limited by provisions that provide for broad national security exceptions.<sup>[67]</sup>

### *Intimidation and Violence*

Critical journalists frequently face violence and harassment when attempting to cover news stories, leading many to flee the country.<sup>[68]</sup> Progovernment trolls regularly harass journalists and ordinary users on social media for their posts about the government or public issues that may be deemed critical.

In May 2017, when Diane Rwigara announced her intention to run as an independent presidential candidate, photoshopped nude pictures of her were circulated online. Observers suspect that state agents were responsible for distributing the photographs in an effort to discredit Rwigara and discourage her from continuing her campaign against President Kagame.<sup>[69]</sup>

### *Technical Attacks*

There was no evidence of technical attacks against online news outlets or users in Rwanda during the period under study. The last reported attack occurred in April 2014, when the investigative news website, *Ireme*, experienced a seemingly targeted cyberattack from an unknown source.<sup>[70]</sup>

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### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> "Statistics and tariff information in telecom, media, and postal service as of the first quarter 2018," RURA, accessed June 2018, [http://www.rura.rw/uploads/media/Telecom\\_Statistics report as of March 2018.pdf](http://www.rura.rw/uploads/media/Telecom_Statistics report as of March 2018.pdf)

- 2 <https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/idi/2017/index.html#idi2017economycard-tab&RWA>
- 3 Akamai, "Average Connection Speed: Rwanda," map visualization, *The State of the Internet Q1 2016*, <http://akamai.me/1OqvpoS>.
- 4 Alliance for Affordable Internet, The Affordability Report, 2017, "Rwanda," [http://a4ai.org/affordability-report/data/?\\_year=2017&indicator=INDEX&country=RWA](http://a4ai.org/affordability-report/data/?_year=2017&indicator=INDEX&country=RWA)
- 5 <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Rwanda-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- 6 <https://www.reuters.com/article/net-us-rwanda-internet-idUSBRE9590SH20130610>
- 7 <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Rwanda-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
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- 9 Philippe Mwema Bahati, "Rwanda to develop a master plan for e-Government," Rwanda Focus via All Africa, December 14, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1Loqu3j>.
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- 11 USAID, "Rwanda Power Africa Fact Sheet," March 28, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2IeHjo5>.
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- 15 R.I.C.T.A, "About Us," <http://www.ricta.org.rw/about-us/>.
- 16 Rwanda Internet Exchange (RINEX), "About Us," <http://www.rinex.org.rw/about.html>.
- 17 Albert Nsengiyumva and Emmanuel Habumuremyi, *A review of telecommunications policy development and challenges in Rwanda*, Association for Progressive Communications (APC), September 2009, <http://bit.ly/1MtEpZY>.
- 18 There is no public information about the ownership shares of telecoms in Rwanda.
- 19 "Statistics and tariff information in telecom, media, and postal service as of the second quarter 2017," RURA, accessed September 2017, [http://www.rura.rw/uploads/media/Telecom\\_Statistics\\_Report\\_Second\\_quarter\\_2017\\_Updated\\_.pdf](http://www.rura.rw/uploads/media/Telecom_Statistics_Report_Second_quarter_2017_Updated_.pdf)
- 20 RURA, "About RURA," accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.rura.rw/index.php?id=3>
- 21 Rwanda 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.
- 22 "Law N.09/2013 of 01/03/2013 Establishing Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) and Determining its Mission, Powers, Organisation and Functioning," *Official Gazette n.14bis of 08/04/2013*, <http://bit.ly/1RMmWwg>
- 23 Cabinet appointments <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/219189>
- 24 Appointment of Patrick Nyirishema <http://primature.gov.rw/news-detail/article/1550.html>
- 25 ACP Tony Kulamba <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/227179>
- 26 Arthur Gagwa, "A study of Internet-based information controls in Rwanda," Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law, Strathmore Law School, Kenya, October 2017, <https://www.opentech.fund/article/new-report-investigates-internet-censorship-during-rwandas-2017-presidential-election>
- 27 The site was added to the block list in December 2015, likely for its critical reporting on the referendum on presidential term limits at the time. See: "Rwanda news website Ireme latest to be blocked," Great Lakes Voice, December 1, 2015, <http://greatlakesvoice.com/rwanda-news-website-ireme-latest-to-be-blocked/>
- 28 Author interview, June 2017. See also: Arthur Gagwa, "A study of Internet-based information controls in Rwanda," Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law, Strathmore Law School, Kenya, October 2017.
- 29 Rwanda to Uganda: Why keep arresting our citizens? <http://www.pmldaily.com/news/2018/07/rwanda-to-uganda-why-keep-arresting-our-citizens.html>
- 30 Interview with journalist writers of *Igihe* and *Kigali Today* who requested to stay anonymous.

<sup>31</sup> Two online news websites, *Umusingi* and *Umurabyo*, had reported experiencing such requests to delete content related to local political affairs and ethnic relations in previous years.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ifex.org/rwanda/2017/06/15/presidential-candidates-censored/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/01/dwindling-options-opposition-candidates-rwanda>

<sup>34</sup> "Law No. 18/2010 of 12/05/2010, Relating to Electronic Messages, Electronic Signatures and Electronic Transactions, accessed October 24, 2014, [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=243157](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=243157)

<sup>35</sup> Author interviews with anonymous journalists

<sup>36</sup> In Rwanda, approximately 85 to 90 percent of advertisements come from the public sector. See: <http://www.pambazuka.org/governance/advertising-and-censorship-east-africas-press>

<sup>37</sup> Katrin Mattheaei, "Rwanda: Censorship or self-censorship?" *Deutsche Welle*, December 9, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1G9oEGP>

<sup>38</sup> "I know very well that people would really want to read an article about some malpractices that happened in a certain District in Southern Province, where agents voted for people who were not around and influenced voters just for a certain candidate to win as was already decided. However, I know that this can endanger my outlet," said one online journalist interviewed on February 24, 2016, who requested anonymity.

<sup>39</sup> In 2014, an international journalist for Radio France Internationale, Sonia Rolley, was repeatedly harassed on Twitter by a user known as @RichardGoldston. Rolley had been reporting on the mysterious January 1, 2014 assassination of Patrick Karegeya, a former top intelligence official in Kagame's inner circle who had been living in exile in Johannesburg. It was later revealed on the official Twitter account of Paul Kagame's office (@UrugwiroVillage) that "@RichardGoldston was an unauthorized account run by an employee in the Presidency. Twitter war shines light on how Rwanda intimidates press, CPJ, <https://cpj.org/blog/2014/03/twitter-war-shines-light-on-how-rwanda-intimidates.php>:<https://rsf.org/en/news/rwandas-media-self-regulator-subjected-intimidation-campaign>

<sup>40</sup> <http://juriafrique.com/eng/2016/12/30/rwanda-enacts-new-ict-regulations/>

<sup>41</sup> Articles 60 and 206: Law N°24/2016 of 18/06/2016 Governing Information and Communication Technologies, Official Gazette n°26 of 27/06/2016 [http://www.myict.gov.rw/fileadmin/Documents/Policies\\_and\\_Regulations/ICT\\_laws/ICT\\_LAW.pdf](http://www.myict.gov.rw/fileadmin/Documents/Policies_and_Regulations/ICT_laws/ICT_LAW.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Article 236, <http://www.therwandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-New-Rwanda-Penal-Code.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Article 233, <http://www.therwandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-New-Rwanda-Penal-Code.pdf>; See also: "Rwanda's new penal code bans cartoons that 'humiliate' public officials," October 2, 2018, <https://qz.com/africa/1410418/rwanda-bans-cartoons-that-humiliate-govern...>

<sup>44</sup> Article 194, <http://www.therwandan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-New-Rwanda-Penal-Code.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Art. 8, "Law No. 18/2008 of 23/07/2008 Relating to the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Ideology," <http://bit.ly/1LS2gUC>

<sup>46</sup> <https://qz.com/africa/1410418/rwanda-bans-cartoons-that-humiliate-government-officials/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/08/rwandan-blogger-stand-trial-genocide-ideology>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.kanyarwanda.net/blog/2017/10/09/norwegian-and-rwandan-authorities-should-be-held-responsible-for-joseph-nkusi-arbitrary-arrest-and-illegal-detention/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/rwandan-police-detain-paul-kagame-critic-diane-rwigara-170924191105595.html>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-rwanda-election/rwanda-disqualifies-only-female-presidential-candidate-idUSKBN19S2L6>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/05/africa/rwanda-diane-rwigara-bail-asequals-intl/index.html>

<sup>52</sup> [https://edition.cnn.com/2018/08/28/africa/hfr-rwanda-diane-rwigara-asequals-intl/index.html?utm\\_source=Media+Review+for+August+29%2C+2018&utm\\_campaign=Media+Review+for+August+29%2C+2018&utm\\_medium=email](https://edition.cnn.com/2018/08/28/africa/hfr-rwanda-diane-rwigara-asequals-intl/index.html?utm_source=Media+Review+for+August+29%2C+2018&utm_campaign=Media+Review+for+August+29%2C+2018&utm_medium=email)

<sup>53</sup> <https://bit.ly/2jgf1aq>

<sup>54</sup> <http://rwandaeye.com/shyaka-kanuma-starts-new-year-in-jail/>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/Rwanda/News/Rwandan-editor-in-custody-over-tax-evasion-and-fraud-/1433218-3504528-1nc9vk/index.html>

<sup>56</sup> <http://en.igihe.com/news/journalist-shyaka-kanuma-completes-jail-term.html>

<sup>57</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: Repression Across Borders," January 28, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1i9HihM>.

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<sup>59</sup> Art. 7, "Law Relating to the Interception of Communications" Official Gazette n° 41 of 14/10/2013.

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