

RWANDA PEOPLE'S PARTY - IMVURA (RPP-I)

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INTRODUCTION

PRE-INDEPENDENCE

Rwanda is a small tropical country located in the Great Lakes region of Africa. It has a population of 10 million people, with a significant number of millions living in the neighbouring countries or in the Diaspora as refugees or settled citizens. It became a German colony following the 1885 Berlin Conference. In 1918 the country was mandated to the King of Belgium whose rule instituted the divisions between the ethnic groups in the country especially between the two main groups, the Tutsis and Hutus. The colonisation of Rwanda also led to arbitrary demarcations of borders and the parcelling of large parts of pre-colonial Rwanda territory and annexing them to the neighbouring countries.

INDEPENDENCE

Rwanda achieved independence in 1961, with Grégoire Kayibanda as its first president. In reality this was a flag independence as the country still remained deeply controlled by the former colonial masters, Belgium as well as France. The post-colonial period was mainly characterised by great instability and ethnic tensions, resulting in periodic genocide and ethnic cleansing that left over 100,000 Rwandans Tutsi dead and forced thousands to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Under the Kayibanda and Habyarimana's regimes, a discriminatory system was established, which meant that Tutsis would be allowed only nine percent of school and university places and civil service positions. Both governments also continued the 1933 Belgian colonial policy of labeling people with ethnic identity cards, and used this practice to attack mixed marriages. This policy remained in place until 1980s. It forced millions of Hutus to live in impoverishment, poverty and between 1961 – 1989, thousands of Hutu left Rwanda to seek a better life in Uganda.

In Rwanda in the meantime, Kayibanda continued to rule with an iron-fist on an openly sectarian basis. The ineptitude of his government generated wide spread social unrest and in 1973, the head of the Hutu-dominated National Guard, Maj-Gen Juvenal Habyarimana, led a coup, ousting Kayibanda and established a military government. Parliament was suspended as Habyarimana formed the Hutu-dominated Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) and decreed it as the only legally permitted political organization. Ex-President Grégoire Kayibanda died in detention shortly after his overthrow, believed as a result of torture and neglect. Habyarimana was killed in plane crash at Kanombe airport, in still un-explained circumstances.

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POST-COLONIAL RULE

Both regimes led by Kayibanda and Habyarimana were friendly to the West and provided a base for CIA operations in the successful effort to oust the left-leaning Patrice Lumumba of the Congo. The Catholic Church also played a very prominent role in the body-politic of the country and was instrumental in maintaining links between Rwanda and Belgium and Germany. The Roman Catholic Church, the primary educators in the country, subscribed to and reinforced the ethnic differences between Hutu and Tutsi. They developed separate educational systems for each, all throughout the 1940s and 1980s and onwards. The country's two newspapers, both strong supporters of the government, were both staunchly Catholic publications.

CIVIL WAR IN RWANDA

The Habyarimana regime very quickly established itself as a vicious and corrupt military dictatorship through-out the 1970s and 1980s while at the same time refugees in neighbouring countries, especially Uganda, were agitating to return home. As a result in July 1987, he banned all refugees from returning to Rwanda. During a state visit to Uganda, Mr Habyarimana told Rwandan refugees to forget their dream of returning home. Instead he advised them to settle in Uganda. This intransigent attitude set the back-drop to the civil war which emerged from around 1986, led by the **Rwanda National Liberation Movement (RNLM)**. And on October 1, 1990, the RPF crossed into Rwanda from their bases in Ibanda forest, Uganda. Though the RPA objective seemed to be to put pressure on the Rwandan government into making concessions, their return was seen as an attempt to instal the Tutsi ethnic group back into power. After 3 years of fighting and multiple prior "cease-fires," the government and the RPF signed a "final" cease-fire agreement in July 1994, known as the Arusha Accord and agreed a power-sharing arrangement. This Accord immediately ran into problems when the Habyarimana regime failed to honour it. This escalated the civil war.

GENOCIDE

On 6th April 1994, Habyarimana was killed in plane crash at Kanombe airport, in still unexplained circumstances. It is alleged that this became the trigger for genocide. The **RPP - IMVURA** on the other hand believes that the conditions for genocide in Rwanda were already existing in Rwanda with or without Habyarimana. Organised armed forces (FAR) and allied militia groups called Interahamwe were set and in place and as soon Habyarimana was killed

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they went into action, using Habarimana's death as the excuse for the violence that then emerged. The extremists began rounding up and killing Tutsis en masse, as well as political moderates irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds. The killing swiftly spread from Kigali to all corners of the country; between April 6 and the beginning of July 1994, a genocide of unprecedented swiftness left between 800,000 and 1,000,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus dead at the hands of organised FAR and Interahamwe militias.

The death of one million people within a short period of time was a tragedy of major proportions and destroyed what little was left of the Rwandan state. That it was a failed state became evident. It also intensified the war being waged by the RPF as its units pushed deeper and deeper into Rwanda to stop the genocide. In July 1994, the RPF overthrew the Rwanda government and set up an interim government led by Pasteur Bizimungu as President and put an end to the genocide. The RPF leader, Paul Kagame served as vice President in the interim government, but in March 2000, he overthrew the interim government and assumed full powers as President, setting up a virtual military government. He went on to enact a new constitution by which elections were held in 2003, which were won by the RPF as there were no opposing political parties. President Kagame was mandated to serve for a 7 year term up to 2010, a term which expires in a few months time. The country is therefore preparing for Presidential elections which are scheduled for August 2010.

THE RPF TODAY

It is the contention of the **RPP – IMVURA** that the current **RPF** regime is repeating the same mistakes of the past regimes that caused state failure and so much suffering for Rwandan people and led to the genocide. It has not come up with effective economic and political policies to deal with the urgent tasks that faced Rwanda post-genocide and faces it today. It has also failed to bring about the most needed national reconciliation. Today the gap between the poor and rich is widening on a daily basis. Rwanda is a police state where people live in extreme poverty and fear. The state is run like a family business; there is an irrational discrimination against Tutsi returnees based on their countries of past asylum. There is an unprecedented campaign to discriminate, blackmail, harass and persecute Rwanda Tutsi refugees who lived outside refugee camps in Uganda. Increasingly, the IBUKA (genocide survivors) have no room in Rwanda while the Hutu community in Rwanda are equally marginalised.

Rwanda has over 1.7 million orphans, children born through rape during and after the genocide, and street children displaced by the 1994 genocide. These children have no future, no hopes, no dreams and no aspirations. Rwandan orphan children and other vulnerable people are segregated from the rest of Rwandan community. Many are arrested and taken to prison and /or to the infamous **IWAWA ISLAND Concentration Camp** and others transported

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and dumped in rural areas away from Kigali where they cannot be seen by foreigners. The RPF has totally failed to solve the monumental problems the country faces, with mounting public discontent, poverty, unemployment and **HIV/AIDS**. The regime is also faced with an internal rebellion within its own army and party which threatens to throw the country back to violent civil war. There is no contingency plan in place to address the needs of those who have experienced physical injuries through civil wars. And some of which have resulted into mental and physical disabilities. In Rwanda today, thousands of genocide survivors still face significant challenges in their efforts to rebuild their lives, including victims of sexual violence, orphans and widows. No trauma and psychological programmes established to promote effective safety nets for the protection of the most vulnerable groups. The country is also faced with the dilemma of the demand from the Rwandan refugees who are scattered around the world who are desperately in need to return to their homeland - Rwanda. These Rwandans have been living in difficult conditions some of these refugees have been stateless since 1959.

Today, Rwanda has more than 2.5 million refugees, some dating back from 1959. There are hundreds of Rwandans fleeing Kagame's oppressive regime for sanctuaries in the neighbouring countries and other countries most of whom in Europe and US. Yet, the RPF inner circle have accumulated enormous wealth at the expense of the common people. Billions of US dollars that are intended to support genocide survivors and improve social conditions of Rwandan people are being siphoned off and stashed in foreign bank accounts. Political persecution has reached new heights, corruption is rampant, and the government is inept and unaccountable. A climate of paranoia has enveloped the country to an extent neighbours are encouraged to spy on each other, just like members of families are encouraged to do the same. The media is today completely muzzled and freedom of expression, a fundamental human right is virtually non-existent. Presidential elections are scheduled to be held this year, but opposition parties have been prevented or obstructed from any meaningful participation. Many have been arrested and it seems the government wants a situation where the current President stands unopposed. This is causing deep anxiety in the country and may lead to violence and significant public dis-order, attested by recent unexplained bombings in Kigali and rumours of coups. These are the same conditions that created and led to the 1990 civil war and 1994 genocide and even previous genocides.

THE RPP – IMVURA

The **RPP – IMVURA** is a new political party born out of the **Rwanda National Liberation Movement (RNLM)** which was formed in Uganda in April 1986 to wage a political and military struggle against the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda. Since the overthrow of the Habyarimana regime, the **RPP - IMVURA** considers that the phase of using armed force to effect social and political change in Rwanda is now at an end and that new forms of political mobilisation and struggle need to be utilised hence the formation of the party.

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The **RPP-IMVURA** has the following as its core principles:

The establishment of :

1. **A regime of freedom**, in which the people determine their own future and a democratic, representative and modern State, based on the people's aspirations and participation
2. **A justice policy** premised on the protection of human rights and the rule of law, with a fully vibrant, responsive and independent judiciary.
3. **A national reconciliation policy** that heals old wounds and unites all the ethnic groups of Rwanda in a common endeavour to rebuild our country and provide a platform on which foster enduring peace and prosperity for all our people
4. **An economic development model** based on a mixed, modern and dynamic economy, serving the people and the country.
5. **A social policy** to provide better living conditions for the people and generally ensure their well-being.
6. **A cultural policy** that guarantees access to the creation and enjoyment of culture, mental and physical recreation.
7. **An independent** and sovereign country with a policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all peoples that plays its full role in the community of nations.