

Rwanda Presidential candidate Victoire Ingabire --punished for independent thinking?

Ngoga's threats reveal that the real purpose of the criminal charges against Madame Ingabire is to serve notice that any political opposition will not be tolerated in Rwanda.
By Peter Erlinder

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[Op-Ed: Rwanda]

On May 14, 2010 Rwanda's New Times, the government daily, reported that Rwandan Prosecutor General Ngoga formally threatened to jail Presidential candidate Victoire Ingabire for speaking with journalists, following criminal charges brought against her for the "crime" questioning the policies and ideology of the current government of Paul Kagame.

According to Ngoga: "The Prosecution is more specifically concerned with continued posting declarations and newspaper interviews she has been doing. The case against her is not one of robbery in which restraining physical movement would be enough to contain further damage. It is a case of destructive and divisive ideology whose damage does not require physical proximity of the offender."

Ngoga's threats reveal that the real purpose of the criminal charges against Madame Ingabire is to serve notice that any political opposition will not be tolerated in Rwanda. And, that the 2003 "sham elections" as reported by EU election monitors, and other outside human rights observers, will be repeated in 2010, unless the Rwandan government completely changes its policies to permit a functioning democracy.

The three charges against Madame Ingabire include: "association with terrorist groups;" "downplaying genocide;" and, "divisionism" all of which are crimes unique to Rwanda that have been denounced by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Commonwealth Human Rights Institute and even the U.S. State Department.

The next hearing is scheduled for the week of May 24, when I will appear on Madame Ingabire's behalf to insist on her continued release, return of her computers and property, an end to interference with her Presidential Campaign and the full disclosure of prosecution evidence and witnesses, as a prelude to dismissal of these politically motivated charges on internationally-recognized grounds of free speech, and the absence of due process.

SOURCE: <http://blackstarnews.com/print.php?a=6539>