



REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

Office of the Spokesperson

Press Release

Kigali, Rwanda | June 7, 2010 - Genocide ideology laws are not about politics or symbolism, and revisionists and ideologues who traffic in genocide denial will be prosecuted and imprisoned, according to Rwandan government spokesperson, Louise Mushikiwabo.

Mrs. Mushikiwabo, who is also Rwanda's Foreign Minister, made these comments after a Kigali judge denied bail to Peter Erlinder, an American academic and lawyer who has been charged after more than a decade of promulgating radical revisionist theories about the 1994 genocide.

"There has been a lot of theatrics surrounding this case – not least from the defendant himself -- but the fundamental issue at stake is whether Rwandans believe it is permissible for genocide defenders and deniers to threaten the hard-won stability and harmony they have built in the 16 years since the death of one million of their families, friends and neighbors," Mrs. Mushikiwabo said.

"The Rwandan people overwhelmingly answer 'no' – in our democracy, the right of Mr. Erlinder and his co-conspirators to peddle lies and conspiracy does not supersede our right to heal and prosper as a people.

"The prosecution of Peter Erlinder is not a political tactic; it is an act of justice. If critics disagree with the Rwandan laws against the denial or defense of genocide, we invite and welcome that debate. What we reject is the politicization of the matter, when nothing strikes Rwandans as less political and more deeply personal than lies and distortions about our tragic and traumatic past," Mrs. Mushikiwabo said.

Mr. Erlinder pleaded to the court that his physical and mental health were endangered by his ongoing imprisonment, but the Judge declined his request for bail.

“The Government respects the court’s ruling and has no interest in seeing Mr. Erlinder’s health suffer. He will be afforded all necessary medical and consular support, as well as full access to his legal counsel. His family should rest assured that he is being kept in humane and safe conditions,” Mrs. Mushikiwabo said.

“The Rwandan Government takes no pleasure from Mr. Erlinder’s plight, but this needs to be understood: flagrant and orchestrated breaches of our genocide ideology laws will be met with the full force of the law.

“Perhaps Mr. Erlinder thought that his citizenship, academic standing or media profile would protect him—why else would a law professor so knowingly and deliberately break the law by entering Rwanda? But he failed to understand that genocide defenders and deniers—however rich, powerful or well-connected—are regarded by Rwandans as serious criminals hell-bent on destabilizing our nation.

“That is why we will continue to pursue this prosecution in the spirit of justice and in the interests of a peaceful and prosperous Rwanda,” Mrs. Mushikiwabo said.

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