



## RWANDA DOMESTIC MEDIA MONITOR REPORT FOR THE WEEK OF: **AUGUST 3<sup>RD</sup>-9<sup>TH</sup>, 2011**



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#### A. MPS PASS 'ACCESS TO INFORMATION' BILL

##### *ORINFOR—04 August: MPs back 'Access to Information' bill (state-owned source)*

Members of Rwanda's Parliament have shown unanimous support for a draft of legislation that, if approved by the Parliamentary Standing Committee and subsequently enacted into law, will help 'boost the country's good governance indicators by forcing accountability'. Dubbed the 'Access to Information' bill, it would require all public officials to provide information on state matters to the media and the public, failure of which would result in "punitive measures". The legislation would also institute a communications officer in all public and private institutions to facilitate the availability of information.

According to James Munyaneza, a journalist with the Rwandan daily *The New Times*, "the draft law's objective is to compliment the country's good governance policy...[it] will now be reviewed by the relevant parliamentary commission before it is passed as a law."

##### *The New Times website—04 August: MPs back 'Access to Information' bill (privately-owned, pro-government source)*

The Access to Information Bill has passed over the preliminary hurdle in Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies as members overwhelmingly backed the draft legislation, which will now be forwarded to a standing committee for further scrutiny. The bill, according to MP Connie Bwiza, is timely, adding that such measures to institutionalize the open and transparent provision of information is the responsibility of Rwandan leaders and will enhance good governance.

Article 4 of the bill stipulates, however, that some information may be withheld by a public organ if it could endanger national security or impedes the due process of the law. The article would also extend to information that could involve the unwarranted invasion of privacy of an individual or if it violates the intellectual property right that is protected by law.

The Bill is the fourth of its kind to be tabled to Parliament in the last several weeks, following the 2009 Media Law, the law governing the Media High Council (MHC), and the law proposing the creation of a Rwanda Broadcasting Agency.

Jean Bosco Gatete of the local newspaper *Umurinzi*, welcomes the early approval of the bill: "Before, it was part of the Media Law. That is a very good step and it will make leaders desist from the bad habit of refusing to divulge information."

## B. U.S. ISSUES VISA BAN ON GENOCIDE SUSPECTS

*The New Times website—06 August: US Bans Genocide Suspects From Obtaining Visa (privately-owned, pro-government source)*

In the White House's most recent effort to strengthen American response to mass atrocities, President Barack Obama has banned the issuance of visas to individuals who have been convicted of Genocide and mass human rights violations. The US government has also ordered the creation of the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB) to execute a more effective response to unfolding human rights atrocities abroad. Reports from the White House indicate the announcements as part of a larger move to acknowledge and respond to mass atrocities as a core national security interest of the United States. In the statement, President Obama condemned the lack of a comprehensive policy framework for responding to—and more importantly preventing—mass atrocities and genocide.

Rwandan Minister of Justice, Tharcisse Karugarama, welcomed the announcement, stating, “it is indeed a milestone and a historical move by the United States, and Rwanda as an ally, highly welcomes the announcement.”

Violators of certain types of human rights abuses had been banned from stepping on US soil under the 1965 US Immigration and Nationality Act; however, the most recent announcement will “fill in the gaps”, addressing those whose crimes do not fit specifically into the enumerated categories covered under existing legislation.

## C. FOOD SECURITY THREATENED OVER RISING PRICES

*The East African—07 August: High prices threaten nation's food security (privately-owned Kenyan source)*

The latest report released by USAid-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (Fewsnet) warns of a looming food crisis in Rwanda, due not to drought, but high food prices. The prices of food staples such as maize, Fewsnet reports, are in some cases double last year's average. The situation is made worse by the small landholdings of poor households, which makes it impossible to produce enough food to last longer than three months. Furthermore, the spike in food prices has not been matched by wage increases, making it all the more difficult for poor households to meet their consumption requirements during the lean season, which generally lasts from September to November. The latter are, as a result, forced to rely more on cash brought in by wage labor, the sale of livestock, and construction work in urban areas. Such measures, according to Fewsnet, will further decrease wages and livestock prices as a result of the flooding of both markets with supply.

Rwanda's rising inflation rate—from 4.54% in May to 5.8% in June, according to the National Institute of Statistics—is attributed largely to this rise in food prices, which in turn is being blamed on higher transport costs incurred by suppliers in Rwanda and the East African Community more generally.

## D. MISCELLANEOUS

*ORNIFOR—07 August: Public reminded they have a right to question the media (state-owned source)*

In the nearly four months since the passing of a resolution to entrust the media with powers of self-regulation, there have been different reactions from societal groups including media practitioners, law makers, and the Rwandan public on the subject. On the one hand, members of the media profession have

expressed confidence in their new powers of self-regulation, believing they will “ensure more dignity and freedom for the media industry in the country.” Some in the private sector, however, have shared misgivings about the media’s ability to regulate itself, with some critics concerned that the industry is not mature enough to self-govern. Self-regulation by the media will require the formation of an association that will perform these regulatory duties, one that has the full ability to ‘deregister’ any offenders, as in the case of the recently suspended ISHEMA newspaper.

*The New Times website—04 August: TR to launch gender based corruption report (privately-owned, pro-government source)*

Transparency Rwanda, a non-governmental, non-profit organization that fights against corruption, is scheduled to launch a report on gender-based corruption in Rwanda next week. According to TR Chairperson Marie Immaculee Ingabire, the study examined both private and public institutions, and will reveal “the prevalence of this form of corruption the sectors where it is most relevant and the categories of citizens most at risk.” The study is the first of its kind in Rwanda.