

Rwanda Domestic Media Report (Jan 1st-9^s, 2010)
By Paula Cook-Dinan, MIGS Monitor for Rwanda

State-Owned Media Sources

Rwandan Radio—5 January 2011: Rwanda prosecutor seeks 33-year jail sentence for journalist

- Prosecutors have demanded a 33-year prison sentence for newspaper editor and publisher, Agnes Nkusi Uwimana, for a range of charges including defamation, inciting public disorder, ethnic divisionism, and genocide ideology.
- The state accuses Uwimana for publishing information in the tabloid, Umurabyo, which is defamatory to President Kagame, including one story in which the President is compared to Nazi leader Adolph Hitler.
- Uwimana has been in preventative custody since August; if found guilty, she could also face a fine of 800,000 Rwandan Francs (approximately \$1,400 US).
- The defense has strongly objected to the length of the sentence, arguing that if convicted, the High Court would essentially be sentencing the HIV-positive Uwimana to death due to her condition.
- Uwimana served a one-year reduced sentence three years ago for genocide ideology and ethnic divisionism.
- The High Court is scheduled to hand down a verdict on February 4, 2011.

Privately-Owned Media Sources

The New Times website—2 January 2011: DR Congo-based rebel returns home to Rwanda with weapons

- A staff sergeant of the rebel group, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), has been repatriated back to Rwanda after fleeing the Nyamurangira region of the DR Congo.
- Sergeant Philip Musabyimana attributed his willingness to return to Rwanda to the encouragement of fellow ex-combatants, who assured him that the Rwandan government would welcome those who returned voluntarily. He also stated that he decided to return home “because the rebel outfit has no purpose in fighting the government.”
- The former rebel emphasized how difficult it is to defect, since all deserters who are caught are killed by the FDLR.
- Sergeant Musabyimana returned with two weapons, one of which—a gun known as the Katyusha one barrel—being the model used to launch attacks in the Rwandan province of Gisenyi between 2003-2008 during the FDLR insurgency there.

RNA (Rwanda News Agency)—3 January 2011: Rwandan politicians said flee to form rebel group

- According to RNA sources, two senior members of two of Rwanda's opposition parties have fled the country and are recruiting a rebel force with plans for war.
- The two men—Secretary General of the PS Imberakuri party, Theobald Mutarambirwa, and the FDU-Inkingi Representative, Theoneste Sibomana—have since been banned by their respective parties, presumably to disassociate themselves from the actions of their former members.
- According to correspondence retrieved by RNA, the two men have since formed the “Rwandese Liberation-Rally-Ubumwe”, whose purpose is to overthrow the Kagame government. RNA sources have stated that the men have fled to Uganda, but that they are also recruiting people from the Congo, and may be looking to join forces with the Congo-based FDLR rebel group.
- Currently, the leaders of the two opposition parties from which the fugitives hail—the PS Imberakuri and the FDU-Inkingi—are in prison awaiting trial for various charges. According to RNA sources, Mutarambirwa and Sibomana communicated their desire to search for new approaches for the parties following the arrests.

RNA (Rwanda News Agency)—7 January 2011: Rwanda priest remanded in custody over Christmas sermon

- Prosecutors have called for catholic priest Father Nsengiyumva Emile to be remanded for 30 days for giving a sermon on Christmas day that criticizes several government programs.
- Father Emile allegedly urged his congregation to reject two government programs, one of which was the use of contraceptives for family planning.
- Officially, the catholic priest is being charged with undermining government programs and ‘threatening internal security’ by provoking dissent.
- If convicted, Father Emile could face a jail sentence of 10 years as well as fines. The Priest insists he was only criticizing the implementation methods of local officials, and not the programs themselves.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)—7 January 2011: CPJ opposes prison terms for two Rwandan journalists

- The Committee to Protect Journalists, a New York-based advocacy group, has publicly opposed the charges levied against the editor and deputy editor of the independent weekly publication, Umurabyo.
- Editor Agnes Uwimana and deputy-editor Saidati Mukakibibi are facing 33- and 12-year sentences respectively after being charged by the Rwandan High Court for incitement to violence, genocidal denial, and insulting the head of state (see above article from January 5).
- The arrests took place one month prior to the 2010 presidential elections.
- The charges are drawn from laws on genocidal denial, according to CPJ East Africa correspondent Tom Rhodes, and that “(the CPJ) calls on the High Court to dismiss these harsh criminal charges.”

- The weekly journal, which has ceased publication after the arrests, came to prominence after two other popular weeklies, Umuseso and Umuvugizi, were banned by the Media High Council.