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March 11, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express my deep concern over the numerous attempted attacks and killings of Rwandan dissidents living outside that country. Any functioning and responsible democracy allows the voices of opposition to be heard. Yet in Rwanda there is a systematic effort to silence - by any means necessary - the voices of those who question the regime in Kigali.

As you know, Patrick Karegeya, a prominent Rwandan opposition figure and former high ranking government official, was killed in South Africa earlier this year. Last week, armed gunmen attacked the home of another popular Rwandan opposition figure in South Africa, Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa. This latest attack marks the third assassination attempt against Kayumba in recent years, and has led to the expulsion of Rwandan diplomats from South Africa. Paul Ruseabagina, the well-known Rwandan humanitarian and anti-genocide activist, has told me of attempts to intimidate and threaten him. Karegeya's murder and the numerous assassination attempts on Kayumba are just the most recent examples of the many Rwandan dissidents who have been killed, exiled, tortured, and unjustly imprisoned over the years.

Rather than condemning targeted attacks against popular opposition figures, President Paul Kagame publicly celebrates them, many times falling just short of taking personal credit. Even while denying accusations of official involvement in the Karegeya assassination, President Kagame told the press, "I actually wish Rwanda did it. I really wish it." Consistently in public remarks, President Kagame indicates that there will be "consequences" for those who question his authority. During an official visit to Rwanda by Maina Kiai, a U.N. Special Rapporteur tasked with examining a country's freedom of peaceful assembly, found that "peaceful public disagreement with the [Rwandan] government is equivalent to criminality."

The Honorable John F. Kerry

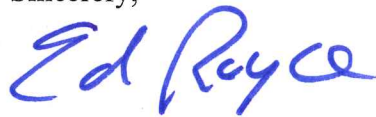
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I appreciate the State Department condemnation of President Kagame's remarks and expressions of concern about the "succession" of politically motivated murders of prominent Rwandan exiles. Yet, President Kagame's actions are louder than our words. Legitimate opposition figures rightly fear for their lives. Allowing President Kagame's violent rhetoric and the slaying of dissidents abroad to go unchecked will only embolden the regime. Toward that end, I encourage you to closely reevaluate U.S. engagements with Rwanda and take into account these troubling actions when considering future assistance.

While I am cognizant of the strategic role Rwanda's security forces play in peacekeeping missions throughout the continent, this should not blind us to the regime's attempts to violently close the political space for opposition voices. As we prepare to mark the twenty year anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda – which claimed the lives of over 800,000 people in just three months and sparked a regional conflict that has yet to be resolved – the friends of Rwanda must ensure that we do not, once again, miss the warning signs of political dysfunction and repression. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to ensure that Rwandan dissidents can speak freely without fear for their lives.

Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE

Chairman