



FREEDOM NOW

Human Rights Council
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Item 6
UPR Adoptions - Rwanda
Statement by Freedom Now
Speaker: Rémy Amahirwa

The presence of prisoners of conscience in a country signals a broader crisis of human rights and democracy. When leaders jail people simply for peacefully exercising their rights, they disregard the laws that protect universal freedoms to maintain political control.

This is clear in the case of my mother, Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza, a political opposition leader in Rwanda. She was arrested in June 2025, for the second time, because President Paul Kagame saw her pro-democracy movement as a threat to his rule. Since her arrest, her right to a fair trial has been repeatedly violated, including through restrictions on her access to counsel and her ability to prepare her defense.

The ill treatment she suffers affects her physical health, while the restrictions on contacting us, her family, take a heavy emotional toll. The government may hope that by removing her from public view, she will be silenced and forgotten. I am speaking today to make sure that does not happen.

My mother's story is not unique. Submissions to Rwanda's UPR point to violations of the rights to life, liberty, security, and political participation. Political figures, independent journalists, and human rights defenders have been persecuted, detained, and prosecuted for criticizing the government. In the most extreme cases, people have disappeared or died in custody, including artist and gospel singer Kizito Mihigo and academic Aimable Karasira, whose deaths have still not been independently investigated.

Rwanda has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing human rights. If this were genuine, Victoire Ingabire and others like her would not be in jail, with their rights violated and their lives at risk. Rwanda must immediately and unconditionally release prisoners of conscience and end its persecution of human rights defenders.

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Freedom Now protects individuals and communities from government repression and defends human rights through direct legal support, targeted high-leverage advocacy, and capacity-building analysis and assistance.