

'It's time to open up'

**Ten years after the genocide in Rwanda:
A Christian Aid report on government accountability,
human rights and freedom of speech**

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Christian  Aid

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The names of interviewees are not disclosed to protect their identity.

Christian Aid is a leading UK and Irish relief and development agency working in some of the world's poorest communities in more than 50 countries. We act where the need is greatest, regardless of religion, helping people to tackle the problems they face and build the lives they deserve. At home and overseas, we campaign to change the structures that keep people poor, challenging inequality and injustice.

Christian Aid has worked in Rwanda since 1963 and today supports 13 organisations whose work ranges from tackling rural poverty to supporting widows and orphans. We also support human rights work and are a member of the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes Region and Genocide Prevention, and of Europe Afrique Central (EURAC), an alliance of European non-governmental organisations concerned with peace, justice, democracy and sustainable development in Central Africa.

For more information about Christian Aid in Rwanda, see www.christianaid.org.uk/world

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Preface

The tenth anniversary of Rwanda's genocide is a time to remember the victims of one of the most shameful episodes in the twentieth century, when the world looked away and almost a million people died. But it is equally a time to reflect on Rwanda today.

We need to look at the progress of Rwanda over the past decade, not least for the genocide's survivors. But we need to examine, too, how civil society and donor governments can work with the Rwandan government to loosen its authoritarian grip, and take steps towards justice, greater rights and a more open society.

The effects of Rwanda's genocide cannot be underestimated. Some scars are visible: churches and schools are still piled with skulls; houses are empty and fields uncultivated. Others are hidden: trauma, fear and suspicion affect the government, the legal system and civil society – in fact all of the country's institutions. This legacy of fear and trauma determines how people speak, think and address their problems.

Christian Aid began working in Rwanda in 1963, supporting churches there to meet the needs of rural communities. In 1994, our support grew as we began to help Rwandan organisations to respond to the enormous needs of the post-genocide period. This included helping orphans' and widows' organisations and peacebuilding. More recently we have supported the successful efforts of Rwandans to rebuild their lives, providing food security for poor people in rural areas, promoting education and health, and tackling HIV/AIDS.

For many Rwandans, including our Rwandan partners, the experience of the genocide is painfully raw. Rather than reflect upon the past, or focus on rights abuses and the lack of political space, they celebrate the internal peace and stability the people and government have achieved.

But we do not believe that stability is enough. Some of the causes of the genocide have yet to be addressed, principally the tensions that exist around ethnicity and power. Our Rwandan partners, and the people with whom they work, are still unable to speak out, and are wary of even mentioning ethnic problems. The media is still curbed, social and economic rights remain unfulfilled, and the resources of the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo are plundered with impunity by proxy militia groups and through trade agreements which divide up the spoils.

Against the backdrop of the horrific events of ten years ago, it is perhaps understandable that the UK and other international donors have given largely uncritical support to the Rwandan government. It is time for this uncritical stance to change. Church and non-governmental leaders have told us that the continued failure to create an open climate of political debate or to address fully the regional causes of conflict could lead to renewed violence. As one bishop from the north of the country told us: 'We [Rwandans] must be careful. If everyone does not play his part, we are likely to brew violence again.'

Christian Aid is strongly committed to the people of Rwanda, and has been for more than 40 years. During this period, we have worked with local partners to address the many needs of the country's most vulnerable people, particularly in times of crisis, of which the 1994 genocide was by far the most acute.

Ten years on, the anniversary of this terrible event provides an opportunity to reflect on the situation of Rwandans today and the prospects for the future. This report represents our findings after ten years of work in post-genocide Rwanda. It calls on the UK and Rwandan governments to engage fully in issues of accountability, human rights and freedom of

speech. It was informed by a wide range of opinions from our Rwandan partners, churches, journalists, embassy officials, members of the Rwandan government and staff from Christian Aid and other non-governmental organisations, both inside and outside the country. The analysis remains Christian Aid's.

Kate Phillips
External Relations Director
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Introduction: 'It's time to open up'

Ten years ago, Rwanda lay ravaged.

In April 1994, a small clique of Hutu extremists launched a brutal, systematic genocide against the Tutsi population, and massacred democratic Hutu opposition. The genocide was halted three months later by the civil-war victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was made up of Tutsis who had become refugees following the Hutu-Tutsi violence more than three decades earlier, together with their descendants.¹

The war forced the perpetrators of the genocide into exile, hidden in an unprecedented wave of over two million people who took refuge in appalling camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania and Burundi. In Rwanda, houses had been destroyed, cattle slaughtered, fields abandoned, government institutions ransacked and professional staff killed or forced to flee. The national coffers were looted; the economy was in tatters; social structures collapsed.

The international community failed to come to Rwanda's aid, and perhaps perversely, it was initially more willing to fund Rwanda's refugees than the process of rebuilding a country in which almost a million people had died. Christian Aid's then overseas director, Jenny Borden, wrote in *The Times* that peace and rehabilitation were 'only possible if the international community... delivers the money it has pledged'.² The UK government, along with that of the US and, to a lesser extent the Netherlands, Sweden and Canada, did step in, calling itself a 'critical friend' of the new RPF-formed government of Rwanda.

After the killing stopped, Rwanda embarked upon a remarkable reconstruction process. In place of genocide and war, the country today is relatively safe, and has newly paved roads and expensive buildings. It has developed a constitution and *gacaca*³ community justice to try the perpetrators of the genocide, and is undertaking ambitious land-reform plans. Those who lived or worked in the region after the genocide would not have dared to dream of such achievements in just ten years. Certainly for our Rwandan partners – witnesses of the genocide and working in some of the worst-affected parts of the country – the period since late 1994 has been a time of relative calm and rebuilding.

But, as these local organisations tell us, many of Rwanda's poorest people have been left behind. Despite the investment of time and money by the government, international and Rwandan non-governmental organisations and local community groups, the needs of ordinary Rwandans are still immense. Poverty is not exclusive to Rwanda; many of its problems apply to other countries, not least Rwanda's neighbours. But, here, there is the legacy of genocide. Women, particularly, have suffered. As a result of rape, used as an instrument of war, many are HIV-positive and as widows are the sole source of support for their families.

There has been little progress for the survivors of the genocide in whose name Rwanda has achieved international attention and funding over the past ten years. A woman left widowed by the genocide, who is today supported by a Christian Aid partner, told us: 'You can tell our government that Rwanda's survivors are living in utter misery. We have no means, no children, no work, nothing to do here. We are miserable.'⁴ Other organisations with which Christian Aid works highlight problems in access to healthcare, education, housing and land.

Organisations seeking to shape the new Rwanda have had little opportunity to voice criticism. 'The history of conflict and impunity in Rwanda has led to a divided society that is suspicious and fearful. People are afraid to give their opinions honestly and often say what

they think the questioner wants to hear or those who pose a threat to them would want them to say. Often, therefore, this leads to a stated compliance with the government's policy.⁵

One result of the closing of democratic and civil society space is that Rwanda's 2003 elections returned President Paul Kagame to office with 95.5 per cent of the vote. The newly elected parliament is composed entirely of parties who had backed his candidature – that is, a parliament without opposition. The opposition Mouvement Democratique Republicain (MDR) and the Liberal Party were banned before the election on charges of 'sectarianism'. The only party capable of posing a genuine challenge – the Parti Democratique pour le Renouveau (PDR) Ubuyanja party of ex-President Pasteur Bizimungu – had been quashed in May 2001 and its leader imprisoned.

Peter Uvin, a longtime observer and former British government consultant on Rwanda, was highly critical of 'a formal election painted on top of an increasingly totalitarian state', following 'the closing off of all political space, a climate of fear [and] intimidation, disappearances, the banning of the sole opposition party with some possible popular grounding, attacks on key civil society organisations [and the] muzzling of the press.'⁶

A recent report of the Rwanda Monitoring Group (RMG), a Dutch consortium including a European church partner, stated: 'Stability without [popular] legitimacy, based on political and economic exclusion and abuse of power, is not sustainable. A short-term choice for stability might well prove to be a longer-term choice for chaos.'⁷ Some of the gravest concerns in this study involve Rwanda's 'export of instability'. In particular, Rwanda's illegal appropriation of natural resources in the neighbouring DRC has been characterised by proxy wars and severe human rights abuses.

The victory of the RPF brought an end to genocidal slaughter, and the start of a new era with a government publicly committed to addressing the needs of all its people. Many in Rwanda, including Christian Aid partners and beneficiaries of its programmes, feel that the achievement of peace and stability in the country is an end that has justified the means, not only in Rwanda but also the DRC.

But cracks are being papered over. A genuine popular mandate for government policies cannot sit alongside the suppression of political opposition. Given the history of the genocide, the key question may be less 'How bad is Rwanda?' – because on many economic indicators the country compares well to its neighbours – and increasingly 'Where is Rwanda going?'

One civil-society advocate, who had been imprisoned without charge, told Christian Aid that it was time for the government 'to open up'. He did not mean merely to open the prison cells of the wrongly accused and political opponents, but to open up opportunities for those left behind in the country's development, to open up space in which civil society and independent media can grow, and to lay bare budgets for scrutiny, revealing the extent to which Rwanda has exploited the DRC's resources, its military spending, and the use it has made of money from international donors.

The signing, in January 2004, of a memorandum of understanding between the UK and Rwanda has renewed the commitment of the two governments to a development partnership. UK aid to Rwanda is slated to rise from £37 million in 2003/04 to £46 million next year. Specific clauses in the agreement bind both parties to strengthening freedom of speech and the media, to opening up society to greater democracy and debate, and to giving more of a voice to ordinary Rwandans in the shaping of their country. Yet it is precisely in this regard that the signs of authoritarianism are being felt.

This report calls on donor governments to respond to the causes and consequences of the Rwandan government's growing authoritarianism. We examine particularly the terms of the UK-Rwandan aid agreement and the gap between its language of democracy and open government and the practice on the ground. We do not undertake this lightly: as an agency which, ten years after the genocide, is still working with survivors, we understand the weight of the tragedy and the costs of Rwanda's conflictive past, including the need to ensure that it never happens again.

But the warning signs are there; we would be remiss if we did not address them. We call on both the British and Rwandan governments to put into practice the terms of their memorandum of understanding. If the Rwandan government fails to protect human rights and democratic space, as promised in the UK-Rwandan agreement, we call on the UK government to consider withholding direct budgetary support until the new targets on justice and democracy have been met.

It's time to open up.

Hutus and Tutsis; 600 years of shifting relationships

Around 3,000 years ago, the Twa, a group of indigenous forest-dwellers, migrated to Rwanda. They were joined 2,000 years later by the agriculturist Hutu, and several centuries later by the cattle-rearing Tutsi. Over time, these three groups came to share 'the same language, god, culture, clans... and lived side by side'.⁸

Profound disagreement exists about their historical social relations. Most accounts conclude that there was a centralised, authoritarian Tutsi kingdom in which Hutus played the role of feudal serfs, but also small Hutu kingdoms where Tutsis held little power.

Nineteenth and twentieth century German and Belgian colonisers extended the ruling position of the minority Tutsi, further decreasing the power of majority Hutus.

On Rwanda's independence in 1962, a small Hutu elite took control, helped by a shift of allegiance from the outgoing Belgians. The new elite used racist rhetoric to inflame Hutu resentment of previous Tutsi domination. The result was the slaughter of Tutsis. Estimates of the death count vary from the UN figure of up to 3,000 to the World Council of Churches' estimate of 10,000-14,000. Many also fled to neighbouring countries, including Uganda.

Rwanda's population grew, and prices for its exports fell. It became the most densely populated country in Africa. Poverty, and pressure on agricultural land, worsened existing tensions.

In 1990, Tutsi refugees facing discrimination in Uganda returned by force to northern Rwanda under the banner of the current governing party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). 'There is... evidence that the RPF arbitrarily killed civilians... large parts of the population rallied around [the Hutu regime]'.⁹ French troops were directly involved in saving the Hutu regime.

Rwandan society became increasingly militarised. Mobs and militiamen directed by local authorities massacred Tutsis. 'There was no Tutsi family in Rwanda that did not live in permanent fear,' comments Peter Uvin.¹⁰ From 1991 a tiny group of Hutu extremists within President Juvenal Habyarimana's regime trained and armed 'self-defence forces' known as the Interahamwe,¹¹ to maintain Hutu dominance by all means necessary, including genocide.

In 1993, the Rwandan government signed the Arusha Accords, promising to include the RPF in elections. Implementation was patchy. Massacres of Hutus and Tutsis in neighboring Burundi forced refugees into Rwanda, increasing tension, and providing propaganda for extremist Hutu groups. On 6 April 1994, unknown assassins shot down President Habyarimana's plane, killing him and the new Burundian president, Cyprien Ntaryamira. Controversy continues to rage about who committed this murder, but the killing was clearly a planned trigger for violence.

The 1994 genocide

At the downing of the president's plane, the Hutu leadership began the systematic assassination of (mainly Hutu) political and legal opponents, and launched a mass genocide of Tutsis. The RPF left its bases in north-eastern Rwanda and began an advance towards Kigali and other parts of the country.

The Interahamwe was unleashed. As during previous massacres, they had the active support of the communal police, propaganda radio and many ordinary Hutus who had been coerced or incited.

Almost all UN and western troops were withdrawn after the murder of ten Belgian soldiers, effectively abandoning the Tutsi population to the genocide.

Around 775,000 Tutsis – and around 25,000 Hutus found protecting them or advocating democracy – were systematically hunted down and murdered. Eighty per cent of these murders were committed in just six weeks during April and May 1994.

The French government – allies of the previous Hutu rulers – sought wrongly to portray the genocide as 'tribe-on-tribe' violence. The popular recollection in the West is of the use of machetes in a spontaneous frenzy of tribal violence of Hutus against Tutsis.

As always, the reality is more complex. As African Rights said at the time: 'Killing huge numbers of people in a short space of time is a complex task requiring sophisticated mobilisation, weaponry, organised killers and a command structure....The speed of mass killing has equaled the rate at which the Nazis exterminated... in a country lacking in modern infrastructure and the technology of mass death.'¹²

Years of racial incitement and suppressed tensions were ignited by the Hutu leadership, which also whipped up fear of the RPF advance. People who murdered in the genocide that were interviewed for this report all believed at the time that they would have complete impunity for their crimes – except, of course, if they refused to participate in the genocide. Hutus who did not join in the slaughter faced the threat of the machete themselves.

It is impossible to comprehend fully the brutality of the genocide without having experienced it. The president of a widows' association, supported by a Christian Aid partner, has her own terrible story to tell: 'I was in a school with my family and 400 people, hiding from the Interahamwe. I saw my husband and six children being killed and I was hit on the back of the head with a machete. I hid in a little toilet for three weeks until the RPF came and took away the bodies and rescued me. My family was killed on 11 April and on 1 May I was rescued.'¹³

A full civil war exploded; estimates of the numbers killed in the RPF's battles with the largely Hutu Rwandan Army (FAR) vary between 30,000 - 50,000. Abuses were committed, including the RPF's summary execution of those responsible for committing the genocide, but the RPF was never accused of the systematic extermination of its adversaries.

The RPF advance – and not western intervention – put an end to genocide.

The role of the church

The churches' complicity in genocide must be set in the context of its ethnic and regional divisions. As institutions, the churches, at best, failed to speak out against increasing racial hatred and preparations for genocide.

Many church leaders failed to struggle against the regime's institutionalisation of ethnic hatred and human rights violations. One bishop said just after the genocide, 'We feel greatly ashamed... we ask ourselves: "Did we preach the gospel in the wrong way?" We want everyone to be a Christian not by words, but by their deeds.'

Other church leaders played a more direct role and were active members of the Habyarimana regime, which organised the slaughter of their own church leaders, or justified it. In June 1994, Anglican archbishop Nshamihigo, for example, refused to condemn the perpetrators of the genocide – the Interahamwe and other Presidential Guard and state machinery.¹⁴

There is also evidence of incidents of martyrdom, heroic self-sacrifice and courage shown by some Rwandan Christians and foreign missionaries.

'The role of the church cannot be ignored'

One Anglican bishop spoke to Christian Aid.

'The role of the church is very visible, traceable and real in the making of the genocide. It cannot be ignored. The church was too much mingled in politics. In colonial times, we were called tribes by our masters. The church could have refused this. They could have said: "No, this is crippling, it is creating a problem which is non-existent." They are implicated.

'In the 1958 so-called revolution, tracts were printed in the church press [often the only presses available], inciting people to kill and burn houses. Churches were manipulated to do the work of colonial masters and pre-colonial native masters... [and were]... exploited and employed by these evil policies and plans. They surrendered. They had no prophetic muscle to challenge.

'I can tell you [names of] bishops... heads of churches... who planned the genocide; they blessed it. They were digging ditches in every place for dead bodies. They were ordering machetes from China to do it. They knew.'

'If we are to create a nation, we must speak the truth. Some churches leaders have confessed and asked forgiveness, like the Presbyterians... I wish that all churches would do this. No church can be let off the hook... they should apologise to this country. We owe people honesty.

'Now, I think the church has taken the lead in reconciliation. Hutu and Tutsi are mingled together in churches. The church is seeing their failure to go deeper in their analysis. So they have taken the lead in helping to get people to be open and apologise and seek forgiveness. I think the church is becoming more realistic. Not only in reconciling people, but in reconciling itself to its calling. Most churches have carried out programmes in peace and reconciliation. But we must be careful; if everyone does not play his part, we are likely to brew violence again.'

The post-genocide years

Over two million Hutus – including the Interahamwe and FAR – fled to terrible conditions in the refugee camps of neighbouring countries.

The RPF formed the new government, initially appointing a Hutu prime minister and president, then progressively inserting returnee Tutsis and scaling up the military against the threat of an invasion from perpetrators of the genocide living in the DRC.

Hutu refugees were initially reluctant to heed RPF government appeals to return to Rwanda peacefully; their fears stemmed from both not knowing how they would be received and from threats. ‘The Interahamwe... will kill you in the camps if you say you want to leave,’ as one Baptist aid worker said at the time.¹⁵

Christian Aid, and many other international non-government organisations, attempted to work throughout the region, especially in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda, where needs were greatest. Christian Aid had a small programme in Rwanda where it previously worked with the Episcopal Church. However, in the wake of the genocide its Rwanda appeal raised more than £4 million to support those affected. Christian Aid established its first field office in the capital Kigali and forged new partnerships with Rwandan community and church organisations.

The first focus was reconstruction. Materials were provided to rebuild homes, schools and hospitals; farmers received seeds and equipment. Since then, projects have promoted longer-term food security, technical skills training, and community cooperation for development, especially on HIV/AIDS and peacebuilding.

International donors were initially wary of supporting Rwanda’s reconstruction. The US funded substantial early rebuilding work, but there was a European vacuum, as France’s relationship with Rwanda had been poisoned by its support for the previous genocidal regime.

The UK, along with the Netherlands and Sweden, filled the gap, establishing itself as a major bilateral donor from 1995-97. This relationship has evolved from providing aid for reconstruction, to donating substantial long-term funding for the Rwandan government, to frequently arguing the Rwandan case with other donors. Politically, the UK played an active role in Rwanda’s reconciliation with Uganda,¹⁶ and supported its ‘security concerns’ justification for occupying eastern DRC, until its official withdrawal in September 2002.

The heart of the relationship has been the two governments’ Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), most recently renewed in 2004. This agreement, outlines the mutual development obligations of both parties – see the box on page 26. One such pledge, made by Rwanda to the UK government, was to ‘support the strengthening of democratic governance, including support for... media and civil society participation... [and] allow legitimate political expression’.

However, the RPF wields almost exclusive military, political and economic control and has tolerated little criticism or challenge to its authority. The RPF faced a formidable re-education challenge. How could a government break the cycle of recurring ethnic violence? It attempted to restructure Rwandan political culture through popular education and making political leaders more accountable, but this has not extended to a legitimate political system.

In 2002, the International Crisis Group wrote: ‘Control over the activities of political parties [has been] partly justified by the fragile security situation that Rwanda has experienced since

1994, [with a] security threat to the country.... The RPF's distrust of multi-party politics [is] inspired directly by the experience of the country's political disintegration in the early 1990s leading into the genocide.¹⁷

Understandably, given the context of the genocide, the Rwandan government has instituted anti-hate laws to counter extremist and living ideologies such as Hutu Power, whose logical conclusion is violence. Harsh penalties can be meted out to those found guilty of 'sectarianism' ('divisionisme' in French), 'discrimination' and 'separatism'.¹⁸ Yet, as a recent EU report suggested, 'a more rigorous definition of these terms is needed' if they are to be used for purposes of justice.¹⁹

The current situation provides neither justice nor security. Instead, ordinary people are afraid of even discussing issues of ethnicity, or using the terms 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi'. This runs counter to people's everyday reality. One Rwandan put it: 'When we get into a bus, all of us – Hutu and Tutsi – still look at people's faces to see if we are in a minority or a majority.'

An official of a European embassy commented: 'I think it is dangerous in the long run to prevent discussion of ethnic identity – it is so important. You cannot say "It doesn't exist any more." Generations people will look at each other in this way. But they will only vote for it if it is made out to be the most important thing.' The implication is that suppression brings greater obsession, and forces the lid down further on the pressure cooker.

The RPF government has also been guilty of using allegations and insults to intimidate opponents, whether they are international NGOs, civil society, newspapers or political parties. Charges of sectarianism have been applied to political parties across the spectrum, including the 2003 pre-election banning of the Liberal Party, which focused its policies on the need of one group – survivors of the genocide.²⁰

Sectarianism, discrimination and separatism could be serious crimes, however they must be properly defined, and allegations of these crimes must also be treated seriously. To date, those political parties accused of sectarianism haven't been charged or given the opportunity to answer the accusations in a court of law.

The International Crisis Group believes the RPF's suppression of criticism is radicalising opposition both inside and outside Rwanda. It comments:

Regulation of political parties should be seen to be above partisan manipulation, with standards imposed not by the RPF but a wholly independent authority. The government must give Rwandan society the chance to regulate itself, to assume its own responsibilities towards the genocide and to create the foundations for general reconciliation... It must not destroy the institutions of common ground where Hutus and Tutsis can meet, talk, argue and ultimately agree on the future of the country. It must reach out to the opposition in exile and offer it participation in a national debate on the country's future.²¹

2003 presidential and parliamentary elections

The MoU commits the Rwandan government ‘to continue to move towards a democratic and inclusive state, ensuring space for the operation of parliamentary opposition [and to]... respect and promote the lawful operations of political parties.’

The run up to the elections was characterised by the imprisonment, exile or disappearance of opposition politicians or military leaders. Twelve prominent people were cited as disappeared in the RMG report of 2003,²² including a former president, an ex-minister of defence and a military major. To date, nobody has been charged or otherwise held accountable for these disappearances.

The opposition, Mouvement Democratique Republicain (MDR), and Liberal parties were banned before the election on charges of sectarianism. The only party capable of posing a genuine challenge – the Parti Democratique pour de Renouveau (PDR) Ubuyanja party of ex-President Bizimungu – had long been closed down and Bizimungu imprisoned.

The climate of the elections was well summarised in the European Union election monitors’ report: ‘In general, the elections were well organised... and election days were calm. But there were serious problems with the electoral campaigns and election days... There was no real opposition. The RPF and its candidate Paul Kagame dominated the two electoral campaigns... in a climate of intimidation [there were] arrests, numerous irregularities and fraudulent practice... and a lack of transparency.’²³

The elections were described by one seasoned observer as ‘a formal election painted on top of an increasingly totalitarian state’, following ‘the closing off of all political space, a climate of fear, intimidation, disappearances, the banning of the sole opposition party with some possible popular grounding, attacks on key civil society organisations [and the] muzzling of the press.’²⁴

Some observers claimed to understand the RPF’s desire to control the presidential election in order to consolidate its power and maintain security. But they were disappointed that the subsequent legislative elections seemed even more unfair – right down to the pressure put on non-RPF chosen candidates to pull out of elections for the few seats allocated to young and disabled people, which should have been decided upon by criteria other than simply political allegiance.²⁵

There is no evidence that the RPF has relaxed its control, which covers every aspect of public life. Perhaps the most damning statement of the EU’s election monitors in 2003 is: ‘Political pluralism is less now than it was in the transition period.’

Civil society

Civil society, in the sense of a counter-balance to government, barely exists in Rwanda.

‘Both local and international NGOs have existed in Rwanda since its independence. There were eight local NGOs registered in 1962, 50 in 1994, and up to 400 international NGOs (INGOs) after the genocide.’²⁶ Virtually all such organisations are engaged in providing material support to poor communities rather than any concerted advocacy on their behalf.

Today, Christian Aid works with 13 partner organisations in Rwanda, two-thirds of which are church-based and one-third of which are NGOs, on projects ranging from large alliances on livelihood security to smaller, targeted initiatives with people widowed and orphaned by the genocide.

Christian Aid works with partners who see it as their role to strengthen civil society and advocate on behalf of the marginalised. But the tendency is to limit criticism to the ‘safer’ economic sphere, for example arguing that the needs of extremely vulnerable groups such as widows and orphans are not being met.

Christian Aid’s own strategy paper points out: ‘The local NGO sector does not exhibit significant coherence, independence of government or influence... [Its] apprehension, or even fear, should not be underestimated... We feel that it is essential that partners are provided with the capacity to undertake advocacy on key issues (such as *gacaca*, land reform, agricultural policies, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy).’²⁷

The UK government has also made plans to promote civil society in its paper ‘Promoting Human Rights and Citizenship Programme’.²⁸ In contrast to the view of our paper, the UK government says that: ‘The context for taking this work forward in Rwanda is encouraging.... Government policy and discourse markedly promotes participation, inclusion, accountability and popular consultation at the broadest level.’

Policy, discourse, and even participation are indeed positive, but this can be misleading. The discussion which took place to develop the new constitution, for example, involved wide consultation in 2003, including with Christian Aid partners. But ‘this involvement was superficial and did not offer any guarantee to the Rwandan people of a real influence on the outcome.’²⁹ Ninety-three per cent of votes were cast in favour of the constitution, but there was no possibility of campaigning against it, and the obligation to vote was confused with the ‘general consensus on the need to vote yes’.³⁰ All of the above does suggest participation and consultation, but says nothing about genuine inclusion, accountability or the right of people to make a choice about their political system and thereby really own the constitution.

The UK plans have not yet been put into action. Rwandan government practice – as shown by the two examples below of organisations engaging in political critique – remains repressive.

Liprodhor: the fate of a critical civil society organisation

Liprodhor (Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme) is a human rights organisation which was created in 1991 in the middle of a civil war under the extremist Hutu regime when, according to a Liprodhor supporter, 'civil society was interested in human rights, but no-one knew about them'.

Human rights violations were frequent, and exploded with the genocide. Of the 50 people who were then Liprodhor's members 30 were killed.

Starting again from zero, and within the umbrella collective of CLADHO (Le Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme), a Christian Aid partner, the organisation reinforced civic education on the theme of peace and reconciliation, and protected victims. A welcome centre was set up for people alleging they had suffered from human rights abuses, and prison conditions were monitored.

Liprodhor's problems may have stemmed from the extremely critical report it published on the standard of prisons, after a prison visit in 2001. Relationships deteriorated further when Liprodhor became embroiled in the government's move of April 2003 to ban the MDR, a predominantly Hutu political party which provided its only viable opposition in the elections. A Liprodhor supporter commented, 'The worry of government was that Liprodhor was strong and could denounce the elections. So they decided to discredit Liprodhor in advance.'

The charge against the MDR was that it had been implicated in the genocide, and was 'sectarian'. However, it had previously divided into two factions, one of which appeared to be pro-genocide and one anti-genocide. For 11 years, the latter had formed a government with the RPF, occupying top national posts.

Nonetheless, an ad-hoc parliamentary commission recommended the immediate suspension of both MDR factions, which were thus prevented from standing in the elections. Liprodhor was mentioned in the long report as a non-governmental organisation 'partly responsible' for the sectarianism of the MDR. The only reason given for this was that there had been members of Liprodhor who were also members of MDR. No proof was offered that these people were 'sectarian'.

A meeting was called to discuss the MDR case by a civil society organisation, Pro-Femmes, on the 'problem of the MDR party'. With television, radio, and high-level politicians present, the meeting turned into an on-the-spot inquisition of Liprodhor's values and practices; not even CLADHO defended it.

The meeting urged that the proper authorities lead a deeper investigation to shed light on the Liprodhor case. This investigation has not happened.

There are two worrying aspects to this case:

1. There has been no due process since that time, either from civil society or from the government, to investigate these allegations. One observer at the meeting concluded that the attacking organisations 'wanted to show loyalty to the government... there was no proof, it was just an accusation without fact... it is intimidation.'
2. A wide range of civil society organisations, including CLADHO and Pro-Femmes either participated or remained silent in a public, televised attack on the basis of unproven allegations against one of their own members.

The media

The UK government is committed 'to work... in support of strengthening the media'.³¹

Rwanda's one television station and one national radio station are controlled by the government. In accordance with its agreement with the UK, Rwanda has recently approved licences for five independent radio stations, some of which have now begun to broadcast. This might be a step in the right direction. However, current plans appear to be for four of these to concentrate on music, while the other will operate from within a state-run university. It remains to be seen whether any of them will be allowed to provide Rwanda's people with independent, critical news and commentary.

The role of the media in inciting the genocide is frequently invoked by the government as a justification for restricting press freedom, and currently only one independent voice survives. According to Human Rights Watch, others have been intimidated into ceasing production – for example the newspaper *Le Partisan* published an article in 2002 outlining the efforts of the RPF to control the MDR (see box on page 16). The editor was first detained and then fled the country. Other publications such as *Le Miroir* were confiscated by the police when reporting on the MDR affair.³²

The case of Umuseso

In 1997, five Rwandan journalists decided to establish independent, objective newspapers in the languages of Kinyarwanda, French and English. The English version ran into trouble. A story about preferential treatment of senior army officers in the DRC brought criticism from the Rwandan government and from an important advertiser, who, according to publisher Umuseso, pulled his advertising revenue. Economically the paper could not survive.

The decision was therefore taken not to publish a newspaper in French. From July 2001, the group concentrated on the Kinyarwanda version, Umuseso, which turned out to be popular.

Immediately, the government branded the paper 'monarchist', 'opposition' and 'sectarian'. In this climate, advertising revenue declined. Sales became the main source of income; insufficient – without journalists' sacrifices and commercial business loans – to pay salaries and rent regularly.

Harassment of the paper has intensified since the elections. In three separate incidents in July, November and December 2003, between two and five staff were imprisoned without food for days, even weeks, at a time. The editor was seized and held without charge from 24-26 December. Whole issues of the newspaper have been seized, as recently as 1 February 2004. Particularly contentious editions have also been purchased wholesale; journalists suspect that this is to prevent the public reading an alternative version of the news.

The main thrust of police interrogation during detention has been 'Who gave you the information?'. To date, Umuseso staff have refused to reveal their sources, pointing out that Rwanda's own law gives journalists the right to protect their sources with confidentiality, and the right to judicial process rather than detention without charge.

Umuseso has never been charged with breaking the law. It strenuously denies all allegations that it receives support from unnamed quarters to promote ethnic 'sectarianism'.

The UK and the Netherlands have already commissioned a media consultancy project to organise awareness-raising seminars, in consultation with the Ministry of Information, to strengthen the media. There are plans for a school of journalism, and training centres in Kigali and Butare. These are positive steps on limited funds, but the true test will be the space which the government allows for the growth of a responsibly challenging media. Umuseso recently published a story suggesting corruption on the part of a vice-president of the supreme court which led to his resignation. However, as with civil society, the RPF government needs to tolerate more than one critical voice to earn the claim that dissent is an integral part of its democratisation and development process.

Dealing with genocide: justice in Rwanda

Within the agreed goal of promoting national unity, justice and reconciliation, the MoU commits the Rwandan government 'to strengthen and implement the *gacaca* process in all provinces, in collaboration with NURC (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission) and civil society.'

Of all the goals of the new government in 1994, justice was perhaps the most difficult to achieve. Tens of thousands of people had participated in the genocide, and were initially massed on Rwanda's borders, including the small groups of Hutu leaders responsible for coordinating the massacres.

As the OECD said, 'Donors tended to argue pragmatically that reconciliation should be the first priority... It seemed possible to limit judgments to only a small group of genocide leaders... For the [government] and many others in Rwanda, this was heresy; there could be no reconciliation without justice.'³³

The difference was understandable; donors have proved reluctant to fund a community justice programme (*gacaca*). Its immense scale will make it costly and unable to attain international standards.

Rwandans who have suffered because of the genocide are naturally determined to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Estimates for the total number of people imprisoned for crimes relating to genocide vary from 100,000 to 150,000. 'These people – of which the chief prosecutor earlier estimated 20 per cent were falsely accused – were detained in appalling prison conditions awaiting trial,' according to the OECD.³⁴

Falsely Accused? Robert's testimony

I am a Hutu.

On the night before the genocide, we were all called out onto the streets. The Interahamwe told us that we must kill Tutsis. But I was not given a rifle, and I managed not to kill people. I escaped Kigali because I knew a military officer.

Three months later, I returned to my home town. I found work in a multinational company. But there was a woman working there who knew me. She was Tutsi, a bit extremist. She was full of hate; I suppose you could understand that. She told me it was out of the question that I work there. 'This is a different age,' she said. Maybe I understand that.

But then she accused me of being Interahamwe, and she accused me of trying to kill her. She had cousins in the military. When I went to work, she told her cousins to come and arrest me.

On my arrest warrant was written 'Attempted Murder'. And then later they added the word 'genocide'. Like other people in prison, I had an empty dossier, because there was no evidence against me. Justice officials sometimes came to the prison. I kept saying there was no truth and no proof. But it made no difference. They just go away, and you stay. They don't do anything about it.

I was in prison for seven years. It was very difficult. We were allocated a 20cm-wide space to sleep in. Sometimes we went three days without eating because the stocks were empty, or there was no firewood for cooking, or the government fell out with the Red Cross suppliers. I heard that after I left, people could even go one week without eating. Others had people who brought them food; I had no-one. Perhaps the only thing I had was the determination to survive.

In prison, you risk being killed. Fellow prisoners are your guards, they are called brigadiers or captains. They make the law. They are the intermediary with the 'outside', the prison director and the administration, who use them to promote and tax lucrative businesses like cannabis and locally brewed alcohol, food, cigarettes and sex.

There were various gangs in the prison, and violence when the brigadiers stole the prison food supplies.

After seven years, I was taken to my *colline* (hill, or neighborhood) to confront the survivors of the genocide in the *gacaca* courts. Nobody accused me. Absolutely no-one said that I was Interahamwe. They said: 'We know of nothing bad that he could have done.' I had spent seven years in prison without having done anything.

This government had promised a programme for rehabilitation. But they lie a lot; there was nothing. This was the experimental phase of *gacaca*; we will be obliged to go back. But I am not afraid of that. I am 100 per cent innocent, I have done nothing. I have done seven years of prison for doing nothing.

I have serious problems. My family were massacred in the war. I have no land, no house. I live with friends, awaiting a stable situation, but it is difficult to find a job with this record. I have no future.

The RMG estimates that 87,000 people are currently in detention, following government pardons and *gacaca*-related releases over the last two years. *Gacaca* – an adapted traditional community justice system – inevitably faces numerous difficulties, including the slow pace of dealing with huge numbers of people, intimidation of witnesses, little incentive for communities to attend and relive their trauma, fresh accusations (with the danger of overfilling the prisons), and donor caution at funding a process which could not possibly try such a huge number of people to international human rights standards.

One criticism of the RPF government is that it refuses to permit its own – admitted – human rights abuses to be tried under the *gacaca* system, on the basis that RPF abuses cannot be compared to genocidal crimes. However, the same government is willing to release 'genocide survivor' (FARG) funds to Tutsis who were outside the country at the time of the genocide.³⁵ There is a clear inconsistency here; genocide must either have been suffered only by Tutsis inside Rwanda in 1994, as is generally accepted, or it extends to other groups. The criteria cannot be changed to suit government priorities.

Economic and social rights

The UK-Rwanda memorandum of understanding aims for:

the promotion and protection of the full range of rights including economic and social rights of all Rwandans, especially the poor, poverty reduction and social inclusion at the centre of policy-making and resource allocation [and] policy responses which address needs of vulnerable groups, eg widows, orphans, disabled...

The UK government correctly states that 'where analysis or interventions on human rights takes place in Rwanda, the vast majority is focused on civil and political rights [with]... minimal explicit attention paid to economic, social and cultural rights. We recognise... the interdependence.'³⁶

Economic necessities are the overwhelming concern of Rwandans. Their primary – and often only – criticism of the government concerns the quality of its expenditure, including the apparent focus of spending on the capital, Kigali, on the military, and on large infrastructural 'show' projects. These include the ongoing construction of the expensive Ministry of Defence building, and the purchase in 2003 of 31 tanks from Israel.³⁷

Rwandans routinely complain that there is inadequate funding through the Ministry of Social Affairs, especially for survivors, ex-prisoners and returnees as well as the rural poor. Even the laudable abolition of primary school fees has not reached everyone. One widow said, 'Primary school was supposed to be free. But it is not free [while we have to pay for uniforms and books]. So we cannot send our children to primary school.' Access to medical treatment is also often difficult. 'We could go to the national hospital for free,' one person told us, 'but in the countryside it is hard to get to one and medicine is expensive.'³⁸

The special fund for educating survivors' families (FARG), for which civil servants are taxed, is not receiving the five per cent of Rwanda's budget that it is promised in law. The fund is meant to provide support for secondary and tertiary education, health, shelter and daily needs. Most of the budget should come from the government, but at the time of publication it had not paid its monthly contribution since July 2003. The fund's activities have therefore been cut, with housing projects frozen, orphan-feeding suspended, and education and health programmes run on credit.

One minister suggested that the fund's early mismanagement and corruption had been overcome, and that the government was grappling with the complexities of identifying true survivors. He conceded, however, that not enough had been done for survivors, suggesting that with the high cost of secondary and tertiary education (and books and uniforms for primary education), even five per cent would never be enough to meet their basic needs.

The state has accepted the responsibility of compensating victims. However, it has not yet devised legislation to implement this compensation, nor has it solicited funds from donor governments to pay for it.

It would be wrong to focus exclusively on survivors of the genocide. Other communities suffer from acute food insecurity. For instance, the 1959 Tutsi returnees 'resettled' by the Hutu government in the tsetse-fly marshes of Nyamata and Ntarama just outside Kigali live in terrible poverty. They lack housing, income and support for overcoming their trauma. They do not criticise, but merely observe that the new RPF government has brought little or no economic change.³⁹ Millions of rural Hutus and Tutsis countryside suffer acute poverty. Some suggest that Hutus further suffer from the mistrust and stigma that come with the generalised accusation of being responsible for the genocide.

It is these communities, most of all, who must look with the most bewilderment at public expenditure on military and show projects, and at the beautiful houses being built by military and political leaders in Kigali's suburbs.

Regional stability and the DRC

Some of the gravest accusations leveled at the government of Rwanda concern its human rights abuses and its exploitation of the DRC's resources.

The UK-Rwandan MoU makes clear the pledges of both governments:

The governments of the UK and Rwanda are committed to the promotion of peace and stability within the region... [and to] strengthening financial accountability and management systems and practices in Rwanda to ensure that public funds are used for intended purposes, are properly accounted for and provide value for money... continue to increase %GDP allocations for the social sectors and economic infrastructure, and decrease %GDP allocation for the military.

But the reality is that Rwandan economic and military involvement in the DRC has undermined that country's peace and stability, channelled appropriated natural-resource wealth into undisclosed military expenditure and distorted the official budget upon which the British government's relationship with Rwanda is partially based.

After the genocide, its perpetrators fled to the DRC, and Rwanda has been required to defend its borders from Interahamwe attack. Many international observers were sympathetic to early RPF incursions into the DRC to pursue elements of the Interahamwe.

However, the government moved beyond defence, progressively stepping up its military, economic and political exploitation of power vacuums in the DRC provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema. Each of these provinces is considerably larger than the whole of Rwanda, and together they are extremely rich in reserves of gold, diamonds, coltan, cassiterite and other precious and semi-precious minerals. The motivation no longer appeared to be just that of dealing with a security threat.

The UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)⁴⁰ commented that in these provinces:

the Rwandan army... with the Rassemblement Congolais pour le Developpement (RCD-Goma), has established economic control... Most of the [army/RCD-linked] companies are owned by Rwandan businessmen who have received favourable conditions of entry... The army itself took responsibility for some of the mining activities and used Congolese labour, sometimes forced, or Hutu prisoners from gaols inside Rwanda... The [government of Rwanda] has controlled much of the revenue [which] has been used to finance the activities of the army in eastern DRC... One estimate is that only one third of the total amount of coltan exported is recorded by the RCD authorities.

As part of the same investigation, the APPG considered the conflict-resolution commitments made in the initial UK-Rwanda agreement of 1998-2001 and concluded:

The MoU continues to fail to acknowledge any role that the Rwandan army, or individual officers, are alleged to have played in the exploitation of resources... The commitment towards... security and human rights... in the zones of Rwandan influence is weak... The Rwandan army has clearly failed to protect [Congolese people's] interests in the [DRC] provinces of the Kivus and Maniema.⁴¹

There have been important developments, however, since the publication of the APPG's research. Following the Pretoria Agreement of December 2002, the DRC formed a new government of national unity (GNU) in July 2003. This GNU includes representatives from

RCD-Goma, the allies of the RPF government. Rwanda's occupation formally ended, and almost all its troops were withdrawn from the DRC, although reports of a continued military presence persist. Recently, the governor of South Kivu, a Rwandan government ally wanted by the DRC government in connection with the assassination of its former president, has been suspended and disarmed.

Politically, therefore, there has been an important step towards a fragile peace in the DRC, backed up by increased aid commitments from donors, including the UK government. One embassy official went as far as to suggest that the Rwandan government's economic interests in the DRC were being threatened by the formation of the new government of national unity.

The full report of the UN Panel on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo (otherwise known as the UN Panel of Experts) points to systematic resource exploitation by both rebel groups and governments. These include Uganda, Zimbabwe, elements within the DRC itself, and the ex-FAR, as well as Burundi and 'a range of African, European and North American businesses in illegal or illicit exploitation', 12 of which are from the UK. However, the report suggests that Rwanda figures prominently among this group, because of its large scale, systematic exploitation of the DRC's resources.

The UN expert panel has published several reports accusing Rwanda of such practices. Its report on the illegal exploitation of natural resources, published in October 2003, reads:

The Rwanda-linked network sought to reassert control [and] also attempted to acquire resource-rich territory... in Ituri... This network is considered to be the most serious threat to the GNU. The main actor is the Rwandan national security apparatus [using]... parallel structures to maintain the same level of military and economic control previously exercised through the Rwandan armed forces.⁴²

The UN observation mission in the DRC, MONUC (Mission d'Observation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo), has consistently requested a greater armed presence along the DRC-Rwanda border to protect the country from illegal resource exploitation. This might constitute another practical step towards UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's stated intentions in 2001: 'The international community could... with our help, sort out the blight that is the continuing conflict in the DRC, where three million people have died through war or famine in the last decade.'⁴³

Rwandan government officials claim that 2.6 per cent of its budget is spent on the military,⁴⁴ but with such unaccounted riches available, it would be difficult to find anyone outside the government prepared to give credence to such a low figure.⁴⁵ Boosting the military budget is not difficult when there are extra millions flowing in from the DRC. The sketchy references to the military in the recent Ministry of Finance's 'Background to the Budget, 2004' concentrate entirely on increasing army allowances and demobilising and integrating ex-FAR fighters. No account is given of recently purchased military equipment and ammunition, or maintenance costs.

The UK government and the MoU

UK assistance to Rwanda was resumed in 1997. In 1999, the governments of the UK and Rwanda signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing the British government to provide 'predictable support to Rwanda for a period of at least ten years'.⁴⁶ The MoU and UK funding demonstrate substantial long-term support for the Rwandan government, which has been essential in helping Rwanda rebuild after the genocide.

Two-thirds of UK assistance to Rwanda (which will increase from £37 million in 2003/04 to £46 million in 2005/06) goes directly to the Rwandan government as budgetary support, which the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) sees as the best way to tackle poverty. Rwanda is allowed to use the money where it is most needed. Monitoring is carried out through the Rwandan government's own Poverty Reduction Strategy and annual partnership talks.

However, DFID also recognises that while the UK's long-term strategy has given the UK government 'excellent access to ministers and officials', it has 'less influence on more sensitive issues, for example the treatment of the independent media...'⁴⁷ The MoU provides a framework within which such issues can be discussed. Similar MoUs developed by the governments of the Netherlands and Sweden with a common monitoring framework allow the UK to act in concert with other donors.

The memorandum of understanding

The nine-page memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed on 29 January 2004, reaffirms the long-term development partnership between the UK and Rwanda, dating back to 1999. The MoU clearly sets out the mutual expectations and obligations of the governments of Rwanda and the UK in reducing poverty in Rwanda, 'serving as a transparent framework for accountability between [the] two governments, and between each government to its parliament and people'. The document lays out indicators of progress and is reviewed in annual partnership meetings following an independent assessment of progress.

For 2004, the government of Rwanda's commitments to the UK fall into six categories:

1. National unity and reconciliation

Selected indicators of progress include:

- the strengthening and implementation of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) strategic plan
- the incorporation of safeguards on civil society activity into all new legislation and government policy.

2. Conflict resolution

Indicators of progress include:

- contributing to regional peacebuilding efforts
- encouraging ex-combatants to return from the DRC.

3. Good governance

Indicators of progress include:

- publishing details in June and December 2004 of all reports of human rights abuses
- respecting and promoting the lawful operations of political parties
- developing the capacity to implement the existing legal and institutional framework for the media.

4. Poverty reduction

Indicators of progress include:

- increasing the percentage of GDP allocations for social sectors and economic infrastructure
- decreasing the percentage of GDP allocation for the military.

5. Sustainable macro-economic stability

Indicators of progress include:

- increasing the percentage of GDP allocations for social sectors and economic infrastructure
- decreasing the percentage of GDP allocation for the military.

6. Human resource development

This relates to technical support to the Rwandan government, eg to improve district auditing skills.

UK commitments to Rwanda are more process-oriented and include:

- working within the Rwandan government's framework for poverty reduction
- using Rwandan government systems and procedures to deliver assistance (the rationale for direct budgetary support to the government)
- making development interventions more transparent.

The indicators for the MoU focus on process rather than highlighting a desired outcome. Thus, one major objective in the MoU is to ‘continue building a democratic and inclusive state, ensuring space for the operation of parliamentary opposition, civil society and the independent media, at the pace that social fragility allows.’ This lets the government set the pace for the opening up of space – and, as documented in this report, in some cases to shut it down. The Rwandan government, supported by the international community, appears to be emphasising short-term stability (which is in its own immediate interests) rather than establishing strong democratic roots and a legitimacy that will provide long-term stability for all Rwandans – and successor governments.

Ten years after the genocide, and at the end of Rwanda’s own declared period of transition, it is time for a proper review of the UK’s support to Rwanda. This does not mean that the UK should stop assisting Rwanda, or end its close relationship with the country. Rather, the MoU should be employed as a ‘tool’ to promote long-term stability there. The UK should play its role of ‘critical friend’ to Rwanda more fully, and subject the country’s use of aid money to more rigorous analysis and monitoring.

One option open to the UK government is to withhold direct budgetary support. Like other donors, the UK has withheld small parts of support to the government of Uganda, over the issue of defence expenditure.⁴⁸ This was seen as an appropriate tactic to influence the Ugandan government’s policies. As Peter Uvin suggests, a similar strategy could be employed for Rwanda. Cuts in direct budgetary support, he comments, ‘should be done in a graduated manner; there is no reason to cut all aid, drop all programmes, end all conversations. One can even continue working cooperatively with the government of Rwanda for the rest. It is not all or nothing.’⁴⁹

Conclusion

There are mitigating circumstances in Rwanda's mixed performance in meeting human rights standards and its citizens' basic needs. These include the legacy of genocide – the loss of leaders and a political opposition, trauma, fear of change, the threat to stability from Interahamwe groups, as well as HIV/AIDS, poverty, population growth and pressures on land.

But in the face of tightening government control of the media, civil society and freedom of expression, the question remains: 'Where is Rwanda going now?' Government accountability, human rights and freedom of speech must be strengthened if Rwanda is to do more than paper over the cracks.

This report concludes that Rwanda has slid backwards rather than progressed on many human rights indicators during the election and post-election periods. There is little evidence that space is opening for political opposition and representation, no credible explanation for disappearances of key political figures, and little obvious concerted effort to meet the needs of genocide survivors and other marginal groups.

Christian Aid believes that the UK government should continue to support Rwanda. But it needs to monitor aid and military budgets rigorously, put into action its plans to encourage civil society and the independent media, and set the overall assistance provided within a regional approach that recognises the needs of all neighbouring countries.

Recommendations

To create a free, fair and open society, and allow political debate, criticism and freedom of expression, the government of Rwanda – supported by the international community – needs to:

- guarantee the freedom of the press through ensuring that the new High Press Council is independent of government and party
- stop intimidating the media through threats and accusations of ‘sectarianism’ when facing criticism
- ensure that all investigations and trials of those accused of divisionism and sectarianism are brought before a court of law without undue delay
- challenge impunity by ensuring that the judicial authorities fully investigate all instances of disappearances and provide information about detentions
- review legislation including the Law against Discrimination and Sectarianism to define tightly any restrictions on free speech
- open up space for civil society to operate by enacting and implementing updated legislation governing NGOs with clear and non-obstructive registration procedures
- engage with civil society in development policy-making in particular in the areas of justice, land reform, food security and HIV/AIDS
- publicly respond to the issues raised by the UN panel on the illegal exploitation of the DRC’s resources
- fulfill its obligations to the fund for survivors, and announce a time-bound commitment to compensate genocide survivors
- acknowledge areas of criticism and enter into constructive dialogue with critics and international donors.

To the UK government

The UK should help the government of Rwanda carry out these recommendations by:

- systematically demanding full investigations and action into reports of human rights violations, particularly disappearances
- providing technical support to the Rwandan government, particularly in the areas of governance reform, freedom of the media, the balance between promoting free speech and necessary anti-hate legislation, and implementing its training programme for civil society and the media
- developing robust governance indicators which can form the basis of future MoUs towards stronger time-bound objectives that emphasise the intermediate steps to the building of a democratic and inclusive state
- being prepared to withhold discrete sums of budgetary support, if MoU indicators are not met for political, rather than practical, reasons
- publicly pressuring the Rwandan government for a response and follow-up to the UN panel on the exploitation of resources in the DRC
- publishing the UK’s regional strategy for central Africa, showing how diplomatic and financial support to Rwanda is integrated with support to the DRC and Burundi
- acting in concert with other donors, particularly the Netherlands and Sweden, to ensure that political space and governance reform are at the heart of future bilateral discussions with the government of Rwanda.

The EU and other international donors to Rwanda should:

- act in concert with other donors to encourage the necessary opening up of democratic and civil space in Rwanda
- promote a regional approach to central Africa, ensuring that support to Rwanda is integrated with support to neighbouring countries.

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- ⁹ P Uvin, *Aiding Violence*, 1998, p 62.
- ¹⁰ P Uvin, *Aiding Violence*, 1998, p 65.
- ¹¹ lit. 'Those who work together'; Interahamwe were militia espousing racist Hutu Power ideology, responsible for perpetrating the genocide at grassroots level.
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- ¹⁴ Tharcisse Gatwa, 'Resisting Democracy in Rwanda', 2003, <http://www.warc.ch/dcw/rw984/04.html>
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- ¹⁶ Tensions between the two countries have led to military clashes in the DRC in 2002 and 2003. The UK has brokered regular talks between the two Heads of State, most recently in January 2004.
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