

Ont

Gratis

Bladz

301 N

Wonin

OPINIONS

# Op-Ed: Must Rwanda Continue To Receive Belgian Aid?



By admin

Posted on August 10, 2021

LATEST NEWS



BUSINESS NEWS

Ruparelia's KISU Shatters Baccalaureate Diploma Exams With 100% Pass Rate



DEFENSE & SECURITY NEWS

Fallen Bush War Hero Maj Gen Rwabantu Eulogized As Fearless Fighter



FEATURED

Killer of Gen Kazini, Jailbird Lydia Dralu Now Free Woman



OPINIONS

Op-Ed: Must Rwanda Continue To Receive Belgian Aid?



POLITICS

MP Nsereko Vows To Face Off With MPs Who Want to Defend Toxic Lumbuye Before Parliament



PROF. FILIP REYNTJENS



OPINIONS

Why Kagame Used Pegasus On Ituri Province Governor Jean Bemanisa An Anti DRC Balkanization



SHARE TWEET SHARE EMAIL

Strange things are happening in relations between Belgium and Rwanda. Rwanda is one of the poorest countries in the world and receives some 50 million euros in aid from Belgium every year. This makes it, after Congo, the second largest recipient of aid from our country. At the same time, Rwandan spy services are particularly active in our country, following, intimidating and threatening real or suspected opponents.

Rwanda is a poverty-stricken country where over 50% of the population lives below the poverty line, yet the regime finds the means to maintain a comprehensive and high-performing system of intelligence and action that is

active in the country and far beyond. Already in 2019, it became known that Rwanda was a user of the expensive Israeli spyware Pegasus which allows WhatsApp communications to be tracked. This system allows a mobile phone to be taken over, access all the data it contains, and even follow conversations that take place when the device is switched off. In July this year it emerged that the phone of Carine Kanimba, the daughter of a Rwandan opponent, had been monitored by the Rwandans when she met Foreign Minister Sophie Wilmès (MR) in Brussels in June. Not only Kanimba, but also Wilmès was thus listened in on by the Rwandan services. The conversation was about the now famous case of the dissident Paul Rusesabagina, who is a Belgian citizen and was lured to Rwanda in 2020 by a ruse, where he is in prison and may be facing a life sentence. In that case, too, the Rwandan regime has not hesitated to spend what was needed: Rusesabagina was flown against his will from Dubai to Kigali in a private jet paid for by the Rwandan government.



TO TOP



Earlier this year, Freedom House published a report on transnational repression, in which Rwanda is listed alongside five other countries, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Iran – none of which are model democracies but all of which are much richer than Rwanda. Freedom House described Rwandan transnational repression as “exceptionally broad in terms of practices, targets and geographical scope”. These practices are by no means confined to Africa: a few years ago, a Canadian investigative journalist had to be protected in Brussels by the State Security Service because of threats from Rwandan agents.

In Rwanda itself, a harsh dictatorship reigns where real or alleged dissidents “disappear”, are imprisoned or murdered, or

flee the country. Longer ago, the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Rwanda and Congo that claimed hundreds of thousands of victims. These imprescriptible crimes were never prosecuted or punished. Impunity only made the RPF grow bolder.



TO TOP

The same thing is happening now. When our ambassador in Kigali raised the Rusesabagina case with the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs in March this year, he threatened that if Belgium continued to take the matter to heart, “it would have consequences for good relations”. That is the world upside down. The Rwandan economy is less than one fiftieth of the Belgian economy. Rwanda is a very aid-dependent country, and the reasons why we support it are historical and ethical, not because we can do major business there. Of course, this dependency should not be exploited neo-colonially, but Rwanda is simply not in a position to carry out illegal activities on our territory that we would not tolerate from other countries either (which

does not necessarily mean that they do not take place, quite the contrary).



The lax attitude of our government is seen as a sign of weakness by the Rwandan regime. Soft power does not make the slightest impression on that regime. Rwanda is a de facto one-party state governed by a former rebel movement that won the 1990-1994 civil war and seized power through the gun. The whole experience of the RPF is marked by the achievements of hard power, which it still uses in its internal governance and regional and international relations. For losers who give in, the Kigali regime has only disdain. It sees such weak attitudes as a license to continue down the hard path.

That is why the Belgian government must send out a

clear signal: if the Rwandan regime is caught once again carrying out illegal and threatening activities on our territory, direct bilateral aid will be suspended. Although Rwanda can carry on without our aid, that message would be strong and might even make other donors think about the consequences of supporting a brutal dictatorship. The argument sometimes put forward that such a suspension would also affect ordinary Rwandans does not hold, since ordinary Rwandans are already victims of repression, human rights abuse and structural violence in part made possible by international aid.

*Filip Reyntjens*

*Emeritus Professor, Institute of  
Development Policy*

*University of Antwerp*

 Post Views: 623

**RELATED ITEMS: FEATURED,  
PAUL KAGAME, RWANDA**



SHARETWEETSHAREMAIL



TO TOP