

## **Press Release of the Late Rwandese President Habyarimana Family in Response to the Rwandese Government Decision to Convert his Private Residence into a Genocide Museum**

On October the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008 the Rwandese government announced its decision to convert the family residence of the late President Habyarimana, assassinated on April the 6<sup>th</sup> of 1994 in a terrorist attack against the presidential jet plane, into a museum in commemoration of the Rwandese genocide, the Rwandese culture and the Second Republic. The family residence of the late President Habyarimana is located in Kanombe, a suburb to the capital city Kigali, close to the airport where the presidential jet plane was shot down during its landing procedure to finally crash against the enclosure of the family property in question.

We, the family of the late Rwandese President Habyarimana whose brutal assassination was followed by the violent massacres of 1994, denounce the hypocritical, perfidious, malefic and ignominious intentions that motivate the decision taken by the current government in Kigali under the false pretences of promoting reconciliation and unity of the Rwandese people. Faced with this arrogant and sadistic gesture of the Rwandese government, we judge important to inform the Rwandese people and those who sincerely aspire to the wellbeing and the truthful reconciliation of all Rwandese people, of the following:

Firstly, the residence in question is a private property build on a land that was acquired by the late President Habyarimana in 1965. Not a single penny of Rwandese state funds was ever used for the acquisition of the land or for any construction that was carried out to build our family home in Kanombe. What the late President started building as a simple country house, was ten years later converted into a bigger home that was gradually expanded to fit the needs of the growing family of eight children. During the first years of his administration, late President Habyarimana lived in the official presidential residence of Kiyovu, in Kigali; the same property he had occupied when he was Defence Minister. Towards the beginning of the 80's, the late President moved into his private house of Kanombe, property which enabled him to get away from the busy city and to be surrounded by nature and take part in farming activities – two things he was particularly fond of – while being at a reasonable distance from the city centre where his offices were located. We lived in this place as a loving and respectable family, fostering values of simplicity, love, respect and consideration for others, heedless of their ranks or origins.

As signs of peace, safety and confidence in which he ruled the country before the aggression and war initiated by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) on October the 1<sup>st</sup> of 1990, the late President Habyarimana never relocated or moved away the neighbouring peasants living close to his property in Kanombe. Even after the beginning of the war, the late President wasn't inclined to comply with a security standard that imposed a security line around his residence, measure which would have resulted into the expropriation of his modest, direct neighbours out of their homes. Despite the ongoing war, the late President Habyarimana never derogated from the practice of receiving his neighbour farmers for a convivial, casual reception on August the 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, the national harvest festival day. As opposed to what the officials in Kigali insinuate, the late President Habyarimana always made sure that state affairs remained separate from his family life, practice which did not prevent him from conscientiously achieving his role of statesman and citizen as well as of a father.

Reported as a curious fact by the Rwandese government spokesmen, is the presence in the residence in question of a nightclub and a religious vault. What is presented as a nightclub was an entertainment room for friends and family, arranged in the basement of the residency based on the idea and exclusive design of the late President's oldest son, a graduate student in architecture. The entertainment room did not present any extravagant features, just a dancing floor, fluorescent plays of light and a lounge room. The late Rwandese President, as a concerned father, did not oppose to this idea as he preferred that his children entertained themselves with their friends at home rather than in the hazardous night clubs of the capital city. Not strange for an active Christian family, is a chapel on the top floor that is still present in the house in Kanombe. Important to mention is that, contrary to the allegations made by the RPF when they took over the country, President Habyarimana never sold the property in question nor did anyone entitled to his heritage after his assassination.

Then, of which right the current government has appropriate itself the use of a private property as it wishes without any consultation or any consideration for the property's title holders. How can the Rwandese government, in the name of unity and reconciliation of the people it claims to defend, destroy third parties, families and Rwandese people's private properties? What a good example of transparency, dignity, noble and respect!

Secondly, the RPF government claims that the property in question remained in the same state it was when it seized power, almost 15 years ago. At the same time, the government in Kigali states that the property in question remained uninhabited for a period of 8 years. The new rulers of Rwanda affirm that they never plundered or altered anything of our house and its gardens, then why do they remain silent on the period when the house in question was inhabited while they were in charge of the country? The information released to the media describe the family residence in question as a luxurious house, equipped with gold-plated chandeliers, large living rooms with leather furniture and other extravagant characteristics that we do not recognize to our house in Kanombe. We are not deceived by the Rwandese authorities who claim that the contents of our home remained intact, especially when they willingly omit to mention that some of their members occupied the house and do not explain what transformations they made during their stay.

More particularly, by this official statement, we, the family of the late Rwandese President Habyarimana, feel obliged to clarify that it is not only the usurpation of the property in question which we deplore and regret, but we also vigorously denounce the shameless and cynical gesture that is dishonest, malicious and arrogant by using of a private property to convey a biased and harmful message with an aim to hide the criminal actions of the perpetrators. Thus, the true instigators of the disaster experienced by all the Rwandese people take this opportunity to associate an honestly acquired family home with a genocide they themselves instigated.

Whereas it is nothing any more but an open secret, this is a case of pure manipulation of the public opinion with a message carrying heavy consequences and at the same time a desperate measure of the current Rwandese authorities to distort the Rwandese history and unburden themselves with the heavy responsibility of their criminal actions on the memory of the late President Habyarimana and his family. It's not because the RPF government has decided to make of the late President Habyarimana its own enemy by attributing him with all evils to justify a war of terror that started with the aggressive attack from Uganda and ended up killing him, that this government has to

portray him to the Rwandese people as a public enemy. It should not be forgotten that President Habyarimana served his country with devotion and sincerity. The late Rwandese President has never provoked or encouraged neither division nor hatred; on the contrary he always worked to fight those vices. He would not have let a tragic event such as the massacres of 1994 take place under his leadership. During his administration, Habyarimana worked for reconciliation, peace and unity for all the Rwandese people, regardless of their ethnic background.

Any well informed and unbiased person would agree that the late Rwandese President Habyarimana had achieved to build a peaceful country until the aggressive attack by the RPF which caused death and destruction of the Rwandese population. This war which the RPF prepared in spite of those who had vested interests in Rwandese consolidated knowledge about its peace, unity and development, proved that the RPF actions were purely driven by power thirst of occupying the country but also by the subsequent covetousness of the rich underground minerals resources of the Democratic Republic of Congo at the expenses of the wellbeing of the populations of the Great Lakes region.

The late President Habyarimana was cowardly assassinated while he was trying to protect the Rwandese people whose interests were his primary concern. He tried to bring back the peace and tranquillity that was violated and significantly damaged by the RPF, peace which he always defended with courage and devotion during his administration and which he believed in against all odds. By purely unfounded allegations, the RPF preaches the non-respect of the memory of a statesman who served his country and his people until the day he was assassinated.

While claiming to promote reconciliation, the RPF encourages the culture of lies, contempt, spoliation and provocation and the law of the jungle. We, the family of the late President Habyarimana, believe that the decision of the Rwandese government to violate the private family residence of Kanombe by converting it into a museum for the Rwandese genocide would rather exacerbate the prospect of unity and reconciliation of the Rwandese people.

We believe that unity and reconciliation in Rwanda should be build based on the search of the truth and the determination of the responsibility and accountability of both the Rwandese and the international parties involved in the dramatic experience that killed Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, Congolese and foreigners in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Furthermore, we believe that unity and reconciliation can only take place through a truthful, impartial and fair justice for all the implicated parties.

In addition, we hope that the remaining wreckage of the presidential jet plane, a Falcon 50, that still lies in the private family residence of Kanombe, will on time reveal to the world the true perpetrators and executors of the terrorist attack which caused the death of the late Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, President Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira respectively, as well as their collaborators and the French aircraft crew members.

We would like to warn the national and international community not to be misled by the Rwandese government which wants to cover up the crimes it inflicted on the populations of Rwanda and all the area of the Great Lakes region of Africa since 1990. It has become a master in the art of manipulation, deception and blackmail in an attempt to hide the horrible results of its actions. Once again, and as the late Rwandese President Habyarimana always said: "History will judge".