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30.05.2015 by Edwin Muson

BBC-Kinyarwanda indefinitely suspended

Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA), yesterday, announced an indefinite suspension of BBC Kinyarwanda service over a controversial documentary aired by the broadcaster in October last year.

The documentary, titled Rwanda's Untold Story, was widely contested in Rwanda and abroad and considered to be an attempt to distort facts about the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

An independent commission of inquiry was set up to look into the programme that had sparked protests within and out of the country.

The commission, headed by former Prosecutor-General Martin Ngoga, recommended termination of BBC services in the country.

"Having examined the findings (of the commission) and found compelling evidence with respect to the allegations against BBC, the regulatory board concluded that the airing of the documentary constituted abuse of press freedom and free speech, violated its own editorial guidelines, transgressed journalistic standards and violated Rwandan laws with particular reference to Genocide denial and revisionism, inciting hatred and divisionism among Rwandans," RURA director-general Patrick Nyirishema said.

"The regulatory board unanimously decided that Kinyarwanda programmes of BBC in Rwanda will be indefinitely suspended. The BBC will continue to air other programmes subject to

compliance with Rwandan laws, regulations and licensing requirements. The identified offences are to be forwarded to the prosecutor-general for consideration and appropriate action."

A source in prosecutions office told Saturday Times that prosecution has the discretion to consider or not, a legal action after a thorough review of the allegations as detailed in the Ngoga Report.

Independent analysts, however, say if Rwanda is to consider a suit against the broadcaster, chances are the case may be filed in London.

Rura commissioned the probe in November, last year, after receiving a public complaints about the documentary that attracted severe criticism from various quarters from within and outside the country, including Genocide survivors; an international coalition of academics, scientists and journalists, who accused the British public broadcaster of being "recklessly irresponsible" and promoting Genocide denial.

During its public hearing, the Ngoga commission heard from 24 witnesses in total, including international academics, researchers, journalists and politicians, among others.

The BBC was asked to present its position but didn't show up during the hearings and, according to Nyirishema, if BBC come forth, discussions would be about future engagements but not reversing the decision taken.

Eng Coletha Ruhamya, the board chairperson of RURA, said the decision will not affect Rwanda's relations with the UK.

The controversial film relied on testimonies of a group of Genocide revisionists and fugitives and characters who are well-known to be opponents or critics of the Kigali government.

23.05.2015 By SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Rights issues in Rwanda take centre stage in US congressional hearing

IN SUMMARY

- Steven Feldstein said that while Rwanda continues to experience robust economic growth and foreign investment, the US is keenly monitoring the repression of citizens and the shrinking democratic space.

Concerns about rights abuses and political intolerance took centre stage during the United States Congressional hearing dubbed “Developments in Rwanda” in which several witnesses testified about the state of affairs in the country.

The Congressional hearing was led by US Rep Chris Smith, who is the chairman of the Africa and global human rights subcommittee.

It featured several Rwandan exiles and another witness in defence of the Rwandan state and a representative of Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Steven Feldstein, the Deputy Assistant Secretary-of-State for the US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, told the subcommittee that Rwanda has made tremendous socio-economic progress over the past 21 years but the US government remains primarily concerned about human rights and political space.

“Indeed, Rwanda’s progress since the 1994 genocide has been remarkable. Rwanda’s GDP has grown at an estimated annual rate of 7 per cent,” Mr Feldstein said, adding that Rwanda has made gains in increasing literacy and preventing mother and child deaths.

The official also praised Rwanda’s contribution and crucial role in international peacekeeping operations as well as making great strides in inclusion of women at all levels of government.

US concerned

He however said the US was concerned about allegations of human-rights abuses and government efforts to crush dissenting voices as well as issues of media freedoms.

“When it comes to the human rights situation in Rwanda, we see three trends of note. First, political space in Rwanda and the overall human rights environment continues to shrink.

“There are reports of targeted killings, and an increasing number of reports of disappearances and harassment of civil society groups and opposition parties,” said Mr Feldstein.

He said that while Rwanda continues to experience robust economic growth and foreign investment, the US is keenly monitoring the repression of citizens and the shrinking democratic space.

Also to testify before the subcommittee was David Himbara, a former advisor and personal secretary of President Kagame, who has since turned into a vocal critic, and Maj Robert Higiyo, a former soldier,

who claims to have been offered large sums of money to assassinate exiled dissidents.

Mr Himbara, who fled the country in 2010, highlighted concerns of human-rights abuses and lack of political space inside the country and encouraged Congress to adopt legislation requiring not only a re-evaluation of current US policy, but concrete action to put Rwanda in its proper category — a pariah state.

Rwanda is yet to respond to the submissions made to the subcommittee. Efforts to reach Minister of Foreign Affairs Louise Mushikiwabo were unsuccessful as she is reportedly out of the country.



22.05.2015 von DOMINIC JOHNSON

Wer Mörder aufpeitscht, ist als Mittäter schuldig

JUSTIZ Bundesgerichtshof kippt erstes Ruanda-Völkermordurteil eines deutschen Gerichts als ungenügend und fehlerhaft

BERLIN taz | Der erste Prozess in Deutschland wegen des Völkermords in Ruanda muss neu aufgerollt werden und dürfte dann mit einer höheren Strafe enden. Der Bundesgerichtshof in Karlsruhe kippte am Donnerstag die Verurteilung des Ruanders Onesphore Rwabukombe wegen Beihilfe zum Völkermord durch das Oberlandesgericht Frankfurt im Februar 2014 und verwies das Verfahren an das Gericht zurück.

Moniert wurde vom Bundesgerichtshof (BGH), dass Rwabukombe nicht wegen Mittäterschaft beim Völkermord verurteilt worden war, sondern lediglich wegen Beihilfe. Damit wurde im Februar 2014 nicht lebenslange Haft gegen ihn verhängt, sondern nur 14 Jahre. Dieses Urteil wurde nun teilweise aufgehoben, weil "die Auffassung des Oberlandesgerichts, der Angeklagte sei lediglich Gehilfe und nicht Täter des Völkermordes gewesen, rechtlicher Prüfung nicht standhält", so die Bundesrichter.

Rwabukombe war in Ruanda bis 1994 Bürgermeister der Gemeinde Muvumba gewesen und lebte im April 1994, als der Völkermord an den Tutsi begann, ebenso wie meisten Bürger seiner Gemeinde als Flüchtling im Dorf Murambi, an Wochenenden auch in der ruandischen Hauptstadt Kigali, wo er mit bekannten Befürwortern der Auslöschung der Tutsi verkehrte, darunter Führer der Hutu-Miliz Interahamwe, die eine führende Rolle bei den Massakern spielen sollte.

In Murambi arbeitete Rwabukombe als Bürgermeister seiner Flüchtlinge weiter, in Kooperation mit Murambis Bürgermeister Jean- Baptiste Gatete - mittlerweile vom UN- Ruanda-Völkermordtribunal zu lebenslanger Haft verurteilt. "Der Angeklagte behielt in seiner Funktion als Bürgermeister die Kontrolle über die Mitarbeiter seiner Gemeindeverwaltung, die Gemeindepolizisten und die Kämpfer der Interahamwe- Miliz", so 2014 das OLG Frankfurt in seinem Urteil; "die Bevölkerung Murambis sowie die Interahamwe-Milizionäre betrachteten ihn als Respektsperson, seine Anweisungen wurden von den Bürgern und den Interahamwe befolgt."

Nach Beginn der landesweiten Massaker an Tutsi am 7. April 1994 flohen viele Tutsi in Kirchen, auch nach Kiziguro in Murambi. Am 10 April beschlossen die Bürgermeister, darunter Rwabukombe, den Sturm auf das Gelände. Der erfolgte am nächsten Tag. Am Vormittag kamen die Bürgermeister, "um den Angriff auf das Kirchengelände zu befehligen und zu koordinieren", so das Urteil von 2014.

Wie der BGH zusammenfasst, wurden in Kiziguro "mindestens 400 Menschen überwiegend mit Macheten, Lanzen, Knüppeln, Äxten, Beilen oder Hacken zumeist auf qualvolle Art und Weise getötet. Der Angeklagte, der bereits am Vortag in die Organisation des Massakers eingebunden gewesen war, rief den Angreifern zu Beginn der Aktion Aufforderungen zu wie 'Arbeitet' oder 'Fangt mit eurer Arbeit an', erkundigte

sich später nach dem Stand der Tötungen, brachte mit seinem Fahrzeug weitere bewaffnete Hutu zu dem Kirchengelände und forderte die Angreifer auf, weiter zu töten."

All dies habe das Frankfurter Gericht zutreffend festgestellt, so der BGH. Damit sei Rwabukombe als Mittäter zu verurteilen. Der Frankfurter Richter Sagebiel hatte zwar 2014 bereits zugestanden, Rwabukombes Tatbeitrag erreiche den "Grenzbereich zur Mittäterschaft". Allerdings hielt er es nicht für erwiesen, dass das Massaker von Rwabukombes Befehl abhing, ebenso wenig, dass Rwabukombe "in der Absicht handelte, die Gruppe der Tutsi als solche ganz oder teilweise zu zerstören" - das ist zur Feststellung des subjektiven Tatbestandes des Völkermordes nötig.

Diese Wertung nennt der BGH jetzt eine "rechtsfehlerhaften Beweiswürdigung" und gibt damit den Revisionsanträgen der Bundesanwaltschaft und der zivilen Nebenklage statt. Der Revisionsantrag des Angeklagten wird verworfen. Die Beweisaufnahme an sich wird vom BGH als "rechtsfehlerfrei" gelobt. Ein anderer Senat des OLG Frankfurt muss sich nun mit dem Fall befassen. Dabei werden nicht die Taten neu beleuchtet, sondern lediglich die Schlüsse daraus. "Es steht eine Verurteilung wegen Täterschaft mit der Folge einer lebenslangen Haftstrafe im Raum", sagte der Vorsitzende BGH-Richter Jörg- Peter Becker. Völkermordabsicht - aus der zwingend



die Verurteilung als Mittäter folgt -
bestehe auch dann, wenn Völkermord
als Mittel zu einem anderen Zweck
verübt werde. Bei Rwabukombe geht es
darum, dass er durch seinen Einsatz
seine Position als Bürgermeister retten
wollte.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

19.05.2015 von Markus M. Haefliger

Ein Dorn im Auge von Despoten

Burundis Modell der Koexistenz von sozialen Schichten und Kulturen ist nach dem gescheiterten Putschversuch der letzten Woche akut gefährdet. Von Markus M. Haefliger

Nach der Niederlage der Putschisten und der Rückkehr Pierre Nkurunzizas in den Präsidentenpalast wird in Burundi das Rad der Geschichte zurückgedreht. Der Präsident, der eine verfassungswidrige Amtszeitverlängerung anstrebt, verfügt jetzt über einen Sündenbock und wird seine Ansprüche gegen eine eingeschüchterte Opposition umso rücksichtsloser durchsetzen wollen. Der Rückschlag wirkt sich auf ganz Schwarzafrika aus, wo in vielen Ländern versucht wurde, mithilfe von Amtszeitbeschränkungen die Idee einer demokratischen Machtkontrolle zu fördern. In den nächsten Jahren kommen ein halbes Dutzend Staatschefs ans Ende ihrer letzten regulären Amtszeit. Die meisten sinnen nach Mitteln und Wegen, die Beschränkung abzuschütteln. Sie fühlen sich nun ermutigt.

Zwei Länder, ein Thema

Noch trostloser sind die Aussichten für Burundi selber sowie das Nachbarland im Norden, Rwanda. Die zwei Kleinstaaten - Burundi mit zehn, Rwanda mit zwölf Millionen Einwohnern - tragen an der gleichen, leidvollen Geschichte eines Konflikts zwischen den Hutu und den Tutsi. Der ethnische Zwist ist eigentlich keiner, er nährt sich mehr aus historisch gewachsenen, kollektiven Annahmen als realen Merkmalen oder Anrechten. Hutu (in beiden Ländern 85 Prozent der

Bevölkerung) und Tutsi sprechen die gleiche Sprache; früher vermischten sie sich oft. Trotzdem fielen ihrem Zwist in den letzten 50 Jahren in Wellen von Gewalt und Bürgerkriegen Hunderttausende von Menschen zum Opfer.

Abgesehen von den Gemeinsamkeiten gingen beide Länder gegensätzliche und in gewissem Sinn komplementäre Wege. In Burundi herrschte lange eine Tutsi-Elite, die sich auf die Armee stützte. In Rwanda dagegen war es vor der Unabhängigkeit von Belgien zu einer Revolution gekommen, die das traditionelle Tutsi-Regime hinwegfegte. Die Vorherrschaft der Hutu mündete dort 1994 in den Völkermord an den Tutsi. Seither kehrten sich in beiden Ländern die Machtverhältnisse um. Aber wesentlich war nun nicht mehr, wer gerade wo die Macht innehatte, sondern die politische Kultur, mit der beide Länder versuchten, den Fluch ihrer Geschichte loszuwerden. In Rwanda tabuisiert das Regime von Präsident Paul Kagame, das aus einer Tutsi-Guerilla hervorgegangen ist, den ethnischen Gegensatz - nach dem Motto «Es kann nicht sein, was nicht sein darf». Das Prinzip kaschiert die Herrschaftsverhältnisse und ist zu seiner Durchsetzung auf diktatorische Mittel angewiesen. Rwanda ist ein Polizeistaat. Das Regime vertreibt seine Gegner oder bringt sie um, wenn es sein muss im Ausland. In Kagames aufgeklärtem Totalitarismus sollen alle am Gemeinwohl partizipieren, solange niemand

die Verhältnisse infrage stellt. Sozial- und Wirtschaftspolitik lassen sich sehen, Entwicklungshelfer und Investoren werden mit Demonstrationen rwandischer Sauberkeit und Ordentlichkeit geblendet.

Chaotisch, aber freier

Der Kontrast zu Burundi fällt ins Auge. Burundi macht stets einen leicht chaotischen Eindruck und bleibt unterentwickelt. Die Regierung von Pierre Nkurunziza hat seit den zwei Amtszeiten ab 2005 auf sozioökonomischem Gebiet nichts vorzuweisen, und sie gilt als schamlos korrupt. Aber in Burundi lässt sich frei atmen. Burundier diskutieren offen darüber, was es bedeute, ein Hutu oder ein Tutsi zu sein. Der Gegensatz wurde nicht ausgeräumt, aber er wird akzeptiert. Eine von Schweizer Experten mitgestaltete Verfassung schuf ein institutionelles Gefüge, das den Tutsi Minderheitenschutz garantierte und Mehrparteiendemokratie und die Medienfreiheit verankerte. Die burundische Bürgergesellschaft und die Kulturszene sind erfrischend lebendig. Das burundische Gesellschaftsmodell funktionierte - teilweise, zumindest bis jetzt. Es war den auf Machterhalt erpichten Regimen der Region ein Dorn im Auge - nicht nur zu Hause Nkurunziza und seinen Hardlinern, sondern auch Museveni in Uganda und insbesondere Kagame in Rwanda. Kagame kann eine Verfolgung der Tutsi,

zu der die Wirren in Burundi ausarten könnten, nicht dulden und droht für den Fall kaum verhohlen mit einer Intervention.

Eine weitere Diktatur?

Die Drohung ist ernst zu nehmen, Rwanda griff schon zahlreiche Male im wesentlich grösseren Nachbarland Kongo- Kinshasa militärisch ein. Noch mehr fürchtet sich Präsident Kagame davor, dass der burundische Wind der Freiheit nach Rwanda herüberweht. Am liebsten sähe er Burundi als kleine, hässliche Diktatur, die die ausländische Kritik an den eigenen Verhältnissen ablenkt - also etwa als den Staat, auf den das Krisenland zuzusteuern scheint.

17.05.2015 by Dennis Agaba

Kigali's Market Children dream of going back to school



Hassan Ishimwe dreams of going back to school and becoming a journalist. (Timothy Kisambira)

On the heels of the newly published Ministerial Order providing sanctions against parents who do not send their children to school and against those who employ children in work that prevents them from going to or causing them to drop out of school, the Sunday Times Dennis Agaba visited Kigali's main markets (in Kimironko, Kicukiro and Nyabugogo) to talk to some of the school-going children who earn their daily bread doing backbreaking work there.

11-year-old Muhire was the first such child I chatted with.

When I first saw him in Kimironko Market he was busy beseeching a woman who had come to buy vegetables to employ him. "Madam I know every corner of this market thus I

will take you where you can buy the most juicy fruits and fresh vegetables", he pleaded.

The woman took a moment to look at the boy, a mixture pity and amazement on her face. She took in the 11-year olds torn clothes and filthy appearance. After a pause she handed him an envelope, and the boy overwhelmed with joy and excitement, led her into the market.

After being given Rwf300 in exchange for their time, Muhire and a friend of his agreed to share their street life struggles with the Sunday Times, a struggle that they attribute to poverty and unbearable situations back home.

"Life on the streets is harsh and challenging, however it's free from suffering and the ruthless beatings from

my step-parent," says Muhire says.

On a visit to Nyabugogo Market I spy a young boy around thirteen years of age comes out of the market, lifting a giant bunch of bananas on his shoulder as well as a half- full sack of tomatoes.

As he walks down the street with his load, he must surely feel the sharp stones piercing his bare feet; you can see the misery and suffering etched on his face. This sight attracted the crowd's eyes, with some looking at him with pity.

After finding out that the boy in question is actually merely twelve, I find out that Yonas Nshimiyimana (the boy in question) ran away from home and came to Nyabugogo to find ways of survival.

1431820467Yonas-Nshimiyimana

"When my father passed away, my mother immediately remarried and my new father didn't like me at all. I was always not in good terms with him. He would beat me all the time even for no reason. It reached a point when I couldn't take his beatings anymore and my mother could not defend me, so I ran away from home," Nshimiyimana narrates.

He further added that, while at home, he would not find food at times when he came back from school.

"As if beating me was not enough, my step father stopped paying my school fees and other school essentials and



Yonas Nshimiyimana, 12, ran away from home. (Timothy Kisambira)

this made me take the decision to leave home,” Nshimiyimana reveals.

After dropping out of school just in primary three, Nshimiyimana started his challenging journey from Huye District to Kigali without his parent’s knowledge.

“I had no money to board a bus, thus my only option was to walk; it took me three days and nights to reach to the capital Kigali and I decided to end my journey at Nyabugogo town market,” Nshimiyimana recalls.

He said: “When I arrived at Nyabugogo, I met a group of other street children who mercilessly teased me calling me ‘villager’ and all sorts of funny names. But at the end of the day we became friends and they showed me how to survive on my own,” Nshimiyimana explains.

With no place to call home, Nshimiyimana still sleeps in trenches, inside the market on stairs and mostly under the cars parked at the market.

After spending six month on the streets, Nshimiyimana decided to go and visit his mother.

“Regardless of the problems back home when I left, I never stopped thinking about my mother, that’s why I work so tirelessly to saving the little money I earn at the market to give to her.

Eventually, with Rwf3,000 as my savings; I returned home last Wednesday to visit her. She was so happy to see that I’m still alive and in good health. Later on, I returned to Kigali after three days to continue my hustling,” Nshimiyimana reveals.

Nshimiyimana earns around Rwf300 to Rwf500 daily, mainly from lifting people’s commodities after shopping. This small amount (less than one US dollar) allows him to afford a plate of food at Rwf300.

Asked about what the government could do for him to improve his situation, without hesitation says “education”.

“Given the opportunity to go back to school, I would become a journalist, so that I could advocate for children who run away from home to live on streets due to family problems,” he explains.

Just like Nshimiyimana, thirteen year-old Hassan Ishimwe, the first born of three, says that he started coming to Nyabugogo market after his family tragedy.

“I still stay at home with my mother and siblings in Gasabo District, Mugeragere sector Karama Cell.

“When my dad passed away in 2013, life at home became challenging. My mother didn’t have the money to keep me in school. I dropped out in primary two and joined the street life,” Ishimwe narrates.

“My mother and I work hand in hand to provide for my younger siblings. We wake up very early in the morning and come to Nyabugogo when the customers are still many; while I’m lifting people’s commodities, my mother also hustles around to find something to take home.

On a good day I earn Rwf1000. This money helps my siblings sleep with full bellies,” Ishimwe explains.

Ishimwe also adds that no matter how challenging life on the street is, he has no any other option to take.

“Sometimes I’m forced to carry heavy luggage or a sack full of commodities that even weigh more than me but what else can I do”, Ishimwe asks.

Ishimwe says his passion for school never stopped even after years of not being in school. If given the opportunity he would go back to study.

“I’m so passionate about traditional dancing and just like my father I would like to become an entertainer.

Perhaps that will happen in the future when life become easier,” Ishimwe expresses wistfully.

Despite of the many different children at Nyabugogo market jostling to tell their stories of street survival, twelve year-old Janvier Bizimana pushes himself ahead of the crowd surrounding me and pleads to tell his testimony.



Janvier Bizimana, 12, is his family's main bread winner. (Timothy Kisambira)

Interestingly, the jovial Bizimana reveals that he is on the streets with his parent’s full approval and encouragement.

“I’m my family’s major provider. Poverty at home forced me to drop out of school

in primary four. Despite having both parents and other seven siblings, my father works at construction sites as a helper and my mother is jobless and always at home," Bizimana explains.

"I am here (on the streets) so that I can put food on the table for my siblings. I hustle everyday and make sure I earn between Rwf1,500 to Rwf2,000 and take it all at home", says Bizimana, also revealing that he dreams of becoming an engineer.

"My humble plea to the government is to help me go back to school. I always feel

bad when I see my fellows children going to school every day while I head to the streets to beg and lift heavy things to survive," Bizimana reveals sadly.

All school-age children must be in school-Government

During a press conference at the Prime Minister's office on Friday, 2015, Olivier Rwamukwaya, Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education, said that parents that don't send their children at school will be penalized.

The community officials and parents are going to follow up on parents who don't send their children to school given the fact it's the child's right and we have universal access to education. Every child has to be in school," Rwamukwaya emphasizes.

The Ministry of Education indicated that, in 2013, school dropout in primary was at 12.4 per cent, while at ordinary level it was at 14.7 per cent and 6.2 per cent at A-Level.

17.05.2015 by Frederic Byumvuhore

Calls for Kinyarwanda signage in public institutions

Many have decried the lack of signposts in Kinyarwanda at hospitals and public institutions, saying that it was a major hindrance to their ability to easily access services.

The majority of signposts in public institutions are in English and French.

Visitors to Kigali hospitals revealed to The New Times that the signposts written in foreign languages confuses them.

Jeremy Bagaragaza was transferred from Kabuye Health Centre in Jabana Sector to CHUK (University Teaching Hospital of Kigali). He complained that he cannot understand the foreign language sign posts at the hospital.

"When I entered here (CHUK), I could not understand the signposts. Everything is written in English. I do not speak a language other than Kinyarwanda. I wish the signposts could be written in three official languages (Kinyarwanda, English and French) to help us," he said.

A patient in Kibagabaga hospital, Aline Uwingeneye, said that when she entered the hospital she could not get understand anything written on the signposts and had to ask for assistance.

"I face this problem whenever I come to Kigali hospitals. I am forced to ask hospital workers to direct me to the right place. I always get confused about the terminologies used on signposts. I ask

myself, who are these signposts provided for? Is it for foreigners or Rwandans? I wish they could first use our mother tongue and then translate the signs into other foreign languages," she requested.

Reacting to the complaints, Dr. Theobald Hategekimana, the Director of CHUK, said that new Kinyarwanda signposts would be added next year.

"We received claims from the population and we are dealing about the problem. The posts are being written and by the beginning of next year they will have been posted. The posts will be helpful. They will save time spent by the patients and visitors asking for directions." Hategekimana said.

Banks embrace Kinyarwanda

Maurice Toroitich, Managing Director at Kenya Commercial Bank, told The New Times that they have taken measures to ensure that bank documents are also written in Kinyarwanda.

"Most documents are written in English because it is the most used language in business. However, our customers need excellent care. So, we are solving the (language) problem faced by our customers while filling in some bank documents. When a client claims that he/she does not understand the language (English), we immediately provide an equivalent document in the language they understand," Toroitich said.

Ela Rubibi, an Equity Bank client, is satisfied with the manner in which the Kenyan bank has tackled the issue of language and advises other businesses to do likewise.

"This bank has dealt with the language issue well, with many of its services provided in the different languages spoken, including Kinyarwanda. However, there are other institutions that do not pay much attention to their customers. The customer is a king. With no customers there would be no services or businesses," he said

Language academy speaks out

An official from the Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture has urged all public institutions to embrace Kinyarwanda.

Nsanzabaganwa Modeste, in charge of the language department at the Academy, says that sensitizing people about their language was paramount.

"We are fighting against the misuse and ignorance of our mother-tongue. Foreign languages should not hinder the use of our mother tongue. Some English words are being used as Kinyarwanda words like maternity, morgue among others. We are urging institutions that receive many people such as hospitals and banks to use the three official languages," he said.

16.05.2015 by EDMUND KAGIRE

Rwanda opposition party alone opposes removal of term limits

IN SUMMARY

- Party president Frank Habineza says altering the Constitution to remove term limits will be against the achievements the country has registered since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.
- More than two million Rwandans have petitioned parliament to amend the Constitution, with some 150,000 requests coming in last week.
- President Kagame is serving his last official term as specified by the Constitution. The Rwandan leader recently said that he is open to going or remaining based on what Rwandans decide ahead of 2017.

Rwanda's only opposition party has petitioned parliament not to amend the Constitution to remove the term limits for presidents, even as the House continued to receive petitions calling for an amendment.

A statement released by the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda (DGPR) reiterated its opposition to any change to the Constitution regarding presidential term limits.

"The Democratic Green Party of Rwanda is fully convinced that it's important to respect the Constitution in order to allow a peaceful transfer of power as it ensures sustainable peace, democratic culture, rule of law and development," said the statement signed by party president Frank Habineza.

Mr Habineza said altering the Constitution to remove term limits will be against the achievements the country has registered since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Speaker Donatille Mukabalisa said they were accepting all views on the matter.

"Everyone is free to come. The doors are open; all Rwandans are free to express themselves. It is not true that we are receiving petitions from one side," she told The EastAfrican.

More than two million Rwandans have petitioned parliament to amend the Constitution, with some 150,000 requests coming in last week.

Ms Mukabalisa said parliament will discuss the matter when it resumes on June 5.

"The House will table the issue and discuss how best the demands of the people can be addressed. One option is to conduct a referendum so that people can vote on the issue. They have spoken through the petitions, but there are other ways set out by the law under which the Constitution can be amended on contentious issues like this one," Ms Mukabalisa said.

The petitions streamed in, with members of the business community through the Private Sector Federation (PSF) leading the way last week.

PSF chair Benjamin Gasamagera said

President Kagame has not only been behind socio-economic transformation during his tenure, but is also a pro-business leader who oversaw major reforms.

"Many of our members, as in other sectors of the country, have been asking us to do something as far as this issue of removing term limits is concerned. The board convened and decided to write to parliament requesting to deliver the signatures. Our reasons are really simple. President Kagame, at the helm, has seen the business sector grow. But above all, he is pro-development; he promoted unity and reconciliation as well as social cohesion. The achievements of the business community under him are many," said Mr Gasamagera.

Rwanda's private sector is largely dominated by and closely controlled by the ruling party, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which runs the biggest business ventures in the country. Most successful business entities are closely linked to the party through their owners or controllers.

It has been alleged that the RPF, which

has been at the helm for the past 21 years, has been pushing, behind the scenes, the drive to petition parliament to remove term limits.

“There could be many people against the plans to amend the Constitution, but in a society like Rwanda’s they certainly fear to do so, fearing consequences and how they would be perceived,” a political analyst and academic who spoke on condition of anonymity told The EastAfrican.

“In normal circumstances, it should be a two-sided debate with one side for and the other against, because even the head of state mentioned that there are two sides to the issue. But at the moment, we may never see those against it coming up,” the scholar said.

While appearing on a radio talk-show over the weekend, Senator Tito Rutaremara, a senior RPF official, said the party has not blocked anyone from expressing a different view on what should happen come 2017.

“I don’t think anyone has brought petitions to parliament against the amendment of the Constitution and was sent back,” Mr Rutaremara said, adding that people should feel free to do so if they have a different view.

Last week, there were reports that leaflets warning citizens against supporting efforts to remove term limits were found by police in two different universities, INES in Musanze, Northern Province and in Kigali Independent University.

According to Mr Rutaremara, the unsigned leaflets should not be given credibility because they bore no name or signature, adding that those who think otherwise should bring signed petitions to parliament.

The debate on the third term calling for the removal of Article 101 has been largely one-sided, seemingly calling on parliament to endorse the processes to amend the Constitution.

President Kagame is serving his last official term as specified by the Constitution. The Rwandan leader recently said that he is open to going or remaining based on what Rwandans decide ahead of 2017.

16.05.2015 By RWANDA TODAY, OPINION

EDITORIAL: New reforms, old dilemmas in Rwandan media

This week, Rwandans woke up to the news that Fred Muvunyi, chairman of Rwanda Media Commission (RMC) — a media self-regulatory body — had resigned unceremoniously just about two years at the helm of what appeared to be a fairly smooth transition to self-regulation.

Mr Muvunyi presided over various reforms and created good relations with various public and international institutions, through which has gradually helped RMC and journalists to gain the much needed public respect and trust.

Therefore, his resignation and the subsequent alleged fleeing into exile is a big concern for media stakeholders, especially those who firmly believe that the self-regulatory mechanism is the appropriate and effective means of strengthening journalistic ethical and professional standards, which is still a pressing issue in the country.

We understand that, prior to his resignation, Mr Muvunyi was accused of insulting the Minister for Local Government, disobeying government institutions and the person of the President and was subsequently forced to sign an apology letter.

The genesis of these accusations revolves around two main issues: His disagreement with the government over the suspension of British public broadcaster, the BBC, for airing a controversial documentary, Rwanda's Untold Story.

Secondly, RMC's initiated State of the Media Report in Rwanda, which was due to be released on Press Freedom Day, May 3, 2015. It's content, although seen by many as being mild, was not received well by the government.

Although the report highlighted the progress made, including media reforms, it faulted the government, in part, for undermining RMC's responsibility for content regulation and the provisions of the MoU between RMC and Rura, when the government ordered Rura to ban the programme and suspend all radio and television channels related to BBC, which was seen as harsh.

However, amid all this, there are some underlying dilemmas that still dodge the media in Rwanda. Journalists in Rwanda hardly win court cases in which they are accused by the State or powerful individuals, a demonstration that quite often the success or failure of these media laws and forms of regulation often revolve around the political philosophy that underlies them rather than the constitutional backing they receive.

Because powerful government officials can still accuse journalists of defamation, it is difficult for media practitioners to hold to account those in power or play their watchdog role.

Mr Muvunyi's whereabouts and safety need to be established and the media assured that the gains made during his tenure will not be eroded.

09.05.2015 by Edwin Musoni

Kagame speaks out on Burundi political crisis

For the situation in Burundi to calm down, the country's leaders must do more to stop the movement of refugees.

The remarks were made by President Paul Kagame, yesterday, during a conversation with China Central TV special contributor, James Chau, at the 45th St Gallen Symposium in Switzerland.

Rwanda is currently hosting more than 24,000 refugees who have fled Burundi following violent protests that erupted after the incumbent President, Pierre Nkurunziza, was nominated to run for a third term in office.

The President pointed out that the bigger issue that has led to the crisis is not entirely about presidential terms but rather what the leader has delivered for his people.

"It is not just about the president looking for a third term. That is just one problem among many," President Kagame said.

"If your own citizens are telling you we don't want you to do this or to lead us, it is because they are saying you are not delivering much to us. So how do you say I am staying anyway whether you want me or not? This is a serious problem."

The elections are scheduled for June 26.

Protesters argue that Nkurunziza's bid for a third term is a violation of the constitution as well as the 2000 Arusha peace deal that ended a protracted civil war.

President Kagame is due to meet with his East African Community

counterparts in Tanzania, next week, to forge a way of calming the growing political tension in Burundi.

In addition to ordinary Burundian citizens, high profile refugees including politicians, lawmakers and judges have fled to Rwanda for safety.

"We will welcome the refugees, we will do the best we can, working with the UNHCR, with other countries and the region. The issue is not how well you take care of refugees. The issue is how we stop producing refugees," President Kagame said.

Seventeen people have so far been killed in the protests.

03.05.2015 by Edwin Musoni

EU commends Rwanda media reforms

As Rwandan media practitioners mark the World Press Freedom Day today, European Union ambassadors and high commissioners accredited to Rwanda hailed reforms that the local media has undergone in the last two years.

The reforms include establishment of the Rwanda Media Commission, enactment of access to information laws, and amendment of the media law.

A joint statement issued by seven EU ambassadors and high commissioners, the states that, "The EU Heads of Mission encourage Rwanda to continue its ongoing media reforms. The new media laws introduced in 2013 showed the importance that Rwanda places in an open and vibrant media, including underlining the journalistic right of opinion and expression, self-regulation, and prohibition of censorship."

Globally the 2015 World Press Freedom day is marked under the theme: 'Let Journalism Thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality and Media Safety in the Digital Age.'

On this day, according to the EU statement, we are reminded of the importance of freedom of expression as part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"The Rwanda Media Commission plays a central role through its self-regulatory mechanism in the application of these reforms. Several EU member states have helped to support these advances with funding and technical know-how,"

reads the statement.

It adds that, "The EU is committed to advancing freedom of expression globally, and we look forward to continue working with the Government and people of Rwanda to realize this commitment."

In Rwanda, the media will mark the day by recognizing outstanding performers during the 3rd Edition of the Rwanda Development Journalism Awards (DJA) at a gala scheduled later today.

The awards aimed at promoting excellent journalism and development oriented media are being expanded this year and will include the role of private sector partners and a public vote for one of the categories.

Journalists are competing for awards in news reporting, investigative journalism, talk-show of the year, video-photo journalism, features writing, documentary/magazine life time achievement and Journalist of the Year award.

The awards are organised by the Rwanda Governance Board and the Rwanda Journalists Association with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

02.05.2015

No FDLR militia here, says Bujumbura as Kagame mum on protests

IN SUMMARY

- Sources in the Rwandan government said that they feared that if the security situation in Burundi deteriorated further, Rwanda could be directly exposed to security threats.
- The sources however, have ruled out the possibility of getting involved in Burundi politics, saying that the country does not want to be dragged into the conflict.
- President Kagame said that the East African region should be able to intervene in Burundi, if Burundians fail to resolve their problems.

Police in Burundi have dismissed as rumour reports that the country had been infiltrated by the rebel group FDLR, even as Rwanda is reported to be closely monitoring events in the neighbouring country.

“It is not true. There are no Interahamwe or FDLR in Bujumbura, let alone in Burundi. These are rumours being spread to scare people,” the head of Burundian Police Ndereya Ndayambaje said.

Sources in the Rwandan government said that they feared that if the security situation in Burundi deteriorated further, Rwanda could be directly exposed to security threats.

“An unstable Burundi is a cause for concern for Rwanda because it presents a serious security threat as an entry point for negative forces that would want to destabilise Rwanda. That is why Rwanda is on alert to see how things will turn out,” an intelligence source told The EastAfrican.

The sources argue that this will only play into the hands of Kigali’s enemies and critics who portray Rwanda as the ogre of the Great Lakes Region.

“If there is going to be an intervention in Burundi, it has to be at a regional level,” said a well-placed source in Kigali.

Delicate situation

Sources further indicate that the situation in Burundi is a delicate one for the two neighbours who share a similar history of ethnic strife and political instability, so much so that unrest in one country could easily spill over into the other.

Rwanda is already overwhelmed by an influx of refugees fleeing Burundi. So far, more than 20,000 Burundians have sought refuge in Rwanda.

Impromptu meeting

Two weeks ago, as more Burundians crossed into Rwanda, President Pierre Nkurunziza made an impromptu visit to Rwanda, where he met his Rwandan counterpart President Paul Kagame in the

southern town of Huye.

The two leaders had “closed talks” but sources reveal that besides the issue of refugees, the two presidents touched on the political future of Burundi, a country currently on the brink of political instability occasioned by President Nkurunziza’s insistence on running for a third term.

President Kagame has tactfully avoided commenting on the political situation in Burundi, a country which remains deeply torn between ethnic Hutu and Tutsi, instead preferring to look at the situation from a regional context.

President Kagame said that the East African region should be able to intervene in Burundi, if Burundians fail to resolve their problems.

02.05.2015 by BERNA NAMATA

Rwanda in a resources, financing dilemma as aid is given directly to specific projects

IN SUMMARY

- In highlighting funding vulnerabilities for Kigali in the 2015/16 financial year, the Treasury has slashed the amount of money it expects to receive in grants and development assistance.
- The dilemma for the government now as it increases spending in the 2015/16 budget, is how to raise domestic resources to fund development spending.

Rwanda is in a dilemma over the mobilisation of resources in the coming months to boost economic growth in the face of donor aid uncertainty.

Faced with insufficient domestic revenue against the backdrop of a weak private sector, the government's funding options continue to be limited.

In highlighting funding vulnerabilities for Kigali in the 2015/16 financial year, the Treasury has slashed the amount of money it expects to receive in grants and development assistance.

Total grants are projected at Rwf358.4 billion (\$537.6 million) against Rwf417.1 billion (\$625.6 million) in the current financial year 2014/15 — is a reduction of Rwf58.8 billion (\$88.2 million).

Donor funding, which has largely fuelled Rwanda's economic miracle, has been shrinking from a high of over 50 per cent of the budget over the past decade following a recent shift whereby aid is directly channelled to specific projects and non-governmental organisations as opposed to budget support.

Now, donor funding is expected to

support about 20 per cent of government expenditure in the next financial year.

The dilemma for the government now as it increases spending in the 2015/16 budget by Rwf5.9 billion (\$8.85 million) from Rwf1,762.4 billion (\$2.64 billion) in the current financial year to Rwf1,768.3 billion (\$2.65 billion), is how to raise domestic resources to fund development spending.

Rwanda's economy is expected to grow by 6.5 per cent this year and the next after growing 7.0 per cent in 2014.

"As our economy grows, it needs more money than what we have been getting from the donors. The only thing we can rely on is debt — we start with the most concessional debt," Minister for Finance Claver Gatete told The EastAfrican on Thursday after presenting the budget framework to parliament.

Mr Gatete said the government is prioritising raising more domestic resources and both external and internal borrowing to bridge the shortfall in the financing.

Total loans are projected at Rwf233.2

billion (\$349.8 million) in the next financial year, which is Rwf20.6 billion (\$30.9 million) higher than the Rwf212.6 billion (\$318.9 million) in the revised 2014/15 budget.

"We still have room to borrow," Mr Gatete said, underscoring that that the country's current debt to GDP ratio is still low at 25 per cent while the IMF advised ceiling is 50 per cent.

However, domestic revenues which are expected to finance a large part of government spending in the next financial year at 67 per cent of the total budget, remain insufficient.

While total domestic revenue collections in the next financial year are estimated at Rwf1,038.1 billion (\$1.56 billion), of which Rwf938.6 billion (\$1.41 billion) is expected to come from tax revenue while Rwf99.5 billion (\$149 million) will accrue from non-tax revenue.

Yet Rwanda's tax body — the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) — continues to miss its targets.

Over the last six months of 2014, tax and non-tax revenue collections were

Rwf406.3 billion (\$589.7 million), five per cent below the Rwf427.9 billion (\$621.1 million) target. But experts say the targets are too ambitious, and higher than what the economy can afford.

“Growth is still largely driven by government spending as opposed to the private sector,” said Paul Frobisher Mugambwa, a senior manager for tax services at PricewaterhouseCoopers Rwanda.

While government efforts have largely focused on increasing domestic taxes, Mr Mugambwa says there is a need to rethink this strategy including intensifying efforts to collect local government taxes and increase the efficiency of the tax body.

Tax revenue in Rwanda, estimated at 14 per cent of GDP, is still low by several standards — including the East African Community convergence criteria of 25 per cent of GDP. The target is to increase this to 17 per cent of GDP in the 2015/16 financial year.

02.05.2015 von JESKO JOHANNSEN

Oppositionelle und Tutsi fliehen nach Ruanda

15.000 Menschen sind bereits aus Burundi nach Ruanda geflohen. Denn eine der Hutu-Regierung treue Jugendorganisation macht Jagd auf Oppositionelle und die Tutsi-Minderheit. Beide sind gegen eine weitere Amtszeit des burundischen Präsidenten.



Flüchtlinge aus Burundi im Auffanglager Gashora in Ruanda (Jesko Johannsen)

John Sibomana vom Flüchtlingswerk der Vereinten Nationen hat zwei kranke Mädchen entdeckt. Sie sind etwa fünf Jahre alt, nicht ansprechbar und liegen unter freiem Himmel auf einem Tuch auf dem Boden. Er macht sich Sorgen, fragt nach ihrer Mutter, findet aber nur eine Bekannte. Sie muss ihm versprechen, dass die Mutter mit den Mädchen zur Krankenstation geht.

Jugendgruppe Imbonerakure droht Oppositionellen

Die Mädchen und ihre Mutter gehören zu mittlerweile mehr als zehntausend Flüchtlingen aus Burundi in diesem Auffanglager in Ruanda. Auch Aline Kamatamo ist hierhergekommen. Auf ihrem Arm hat sie ihren sechs Monate alten Sohn.

"Wir sind geflohen, weil wir Angst vor der Jugendgruppe Imbonerakure haben. Sie sind zu unserem Haus gekommen und haben gesagt, dass sie uns töten werden, weil wir nicht den Präsidenten wählen. Nachdem wir hier angekommen sind, haben wir zu Hause angerufen und erfahren, dass unser ganzer Besitz gestohlen und unser Haus niedergebrannt wurde."

Alle Flüchtlinge hier haben Angst vor der Jugendgruppe Imbonerakure. Sie gehört der Partei CNDD-FDD von Burundis Präsident Nkurunziza an. Schwer bewaffnet macht sie Jagd auf alle, die nicht Parteimitglied sind. Häuser von Oppositionsanhängern werden markiert und die Bewohner bedroht und auch getötet. Entlang der Grenze zu Ruanda

hat die Gruppe Wachposten aufgestellt, um Flüchtlinge abzufangen. Viele kommen erst nach vielen Tagen Flucht, nachts und nur mit den Kleidern, die sie tragen. Aline Kamatamo ist mit ihrem Kind auf dem Rücken durch einen Grenzfluss geschwommen. Auch Innocent Ndibanje hatte eine schwere Flucht:

"Ich bin mit dem Fahrrad auf kleinen Wegen nach Ruanda gekommen. Auf den Hauptstraßen wird man zusammengeschlagen. Von Soldaten oder anderen, die uns daran hindern wollen, nach Ruanda zu kommen."

Flüchtlingslager seit April eröffnet

Materialausgabe für die Neuankömmlinge. Decken, Seifen, Sanitärprodukte und Moskitonetze werden verteilt. Konstantina Loupeidou vom UN-Flüchtlingswerk koordiniert die Abläufe im Lager seit es Anfang April eröffnet wurde.

"Als der Zustrom anging, war hier keine Infrastruktur. Es gab nur Bauruinen aus der Zeit vor dem Krieg 1994. Wir renovieren sie und bauen große Gemeinschaftszelte für die Familien, die aus Burundi kommen."

Aus Baumstämmen werden die riesigen Zelte zusammengebaut mit 20 Zimmer

für je fünf Personen. Doch die Flüchtlinge kommen schneller, als die Zelte fertig werden.

"Die Menschen kommen sofort zu den großen Zelten. Das macht es uns schwer, am Ende Räume einzuteilen, weil die Flüchtlinge schon alle drin wohnen, um sich vor dem Wetter zu schützen."

60 Prozent der Flüchtlinge sind Kinder

Es ist Regenzeit in Ruanda. Die teils heftigen Regenfälle verwandeln das Lager regelmäßig in eine Schlammwüste. Abwässer fließen zwischen den Zelten, denn Toiletten und Duschen sind noch Provisorien. Viele Flüchtlinge haben nur ihr Moskitonetz als Schutz für die Nacht.

60 Prozent der Flüchtlinge sind Kinder. Viele von ihnen kommen alleine ohne Eltern oder Familienmitglieder. Gerardine Benimana von der Hilfsorganisation Plan International registriert täglich mehr als 50 Kinder, die alleine auf der Flucht sind.

"Wir hören von den Kindern, dass es in ihren Dörfern unsicher geworden ist. Die Eltern entscheiden sich dann, ihre Kinder alleine nach Ruanda zu schicken, damit sie hier in Sicherheit sind. Darum haben wir so viele Kinder, die alleine gekommen sind."

Plan International und andere Kinderhilfsorganisationen kümmern sich nicht nur um diese Kinder, sondern suchen auch nach ihren Eltern.

"Wir versuchen auch herauszufinden, ob die Eltern in einem Auffanglager registriert sind, um die Familien wieder zusammenzubringen. Eltern kommen auch zu uns und sagen, dass sie ihre

Kinder suchen. Wir schauen dann, ob wir die Kinder finden und dann werden die Familien wieder zusammengebracht."

Aufbrechen von Hutu-Tutsi-Rivalitäten?

Der Flüchtlingsstrom aus Burundi ist Folge einer politisch schwierigen Lage. In Burundi ist eine Hutu-Regierung an der Macht. Beobachter befürchten nun eine neue systematische Verfolgung von Tutsi – der Minderheit im Land. Stephan Klingebiel vom Deutschen Institut für Entwicklungspolitik sieht die aktuelle Entwicklung als Ergebnis der gescheiterten Demokratisierung des Landes nach dem Friedensvertrag von 2005.

"Leider ist es in Burundi, gerade wenn man sich das Parteiensystem ansieht, doch noch sehr stark von diesen ethnischen Zugehörigkeiten geprägt. Das Potenzial, dass so etwas instrumentalisiert und auch perzipiert wird, ist natürlich ganz, ganz groß."

Schon jetzt werden der bewaffneten Jugendmiliz der Regierungspartei geplante Tötungen zugetraut. Für die flüchtenden Tutsi ist neben der Todesangst vor allem erschreckend, wie schnell ihre Verfolger sich radikalisiert haben, sagt Remi Sirabahenda. Aus Freunden werden Mörder

"Es ist schwer anzuerkennen, was aus unseren Freunden geworden ist. Sie hatten auch Felder oder Kühe und wir haben sie Freunde genannt. Plötzlich hat sich etwas geändert und jemand, der mal dein Freund war kommt mit Waffen zu dir und ist auf der Seite der Regierung."

Aline Kamatamo will mit ihrem Baby deshalb auch nicht sobald zurück in ihre Heimat.

"Nein. Es ist zu unsicher. Die Menschen werden noch lange fliehen und ich

glaube, es wird Krieg geben."

Niemand im Auffanglager Gashora kann und will prognostizieren, wie viele Menschen noch aus Burundi kommen werden. Das Flüchtlingswerk der Vereinten Nationen hat sich allerdings auf 50.000 Flüchtlinge eingestellt.

01.05.2015 by James Karuhanga

Rwanda, China look to deepen ties

The Government and the People's Republic of China are looking to further deepen bilateral ties.

This follows a special visit to China by a Rwandan delegation led by Foreign Affairs minister, Louise Mushikiwabo on Wednesday, at the invitation of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister, Wang Yi.

In Beijing, Mushikiwabo and her Chinese counterpart discussed bilateral cooperation issues.

"They resolved to pursue efforts to deepen bilateral relations through projects in the sectors of cultural exchanges, tourism, human resource development, health services, and, most importantly, industrial cooperation extended within the East Africa regional context," according to the statement.

The statement, the two countries also agreed to scale up the frequency of bilateral political consultations, it added.

The Minister for Infrastructure, James Musoni, who was part of the Rwandan delegation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with Song Dongsheng, the Chairperson of SINOHYDRO, a Chinese industry leader in engineering and construction to establish a framework of cooperation to implement the hydro power station projects of Nyabugogo II and Mutobo Project station in Rwanda.

SINOHYDRO is a state-owned hydro power project contractor considered to be the driving force behind China's industrial development, and playing a leading role in enterprise technical innovations, management system reforms and international business development.

The Chinese government has for a long time supported Rwanda in various sectors, including agriculture, health and construction sectors, among others.

The Rwanda delegation is expected to wind up the tour on Saturday.

In 2013, the bilateral trade value between China and Rwanda reached \$243,000,000, composed of \$134,000,000 in exports from China and \$109,000,000 in export from Rwanda.

As a measure to help Rwanda increase its exports to China, it's extended duty-free treatment to 95% of Rwandan products in the Chinese market. China also facilitates the participation of Rwandan companies in various Chinese Import and Export Fairs, so that they can directly promote their products.