

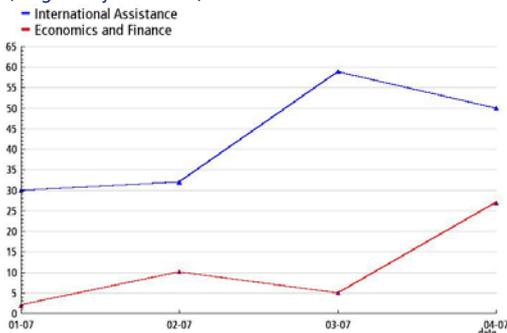
## RWANDA | Trends in Conflict and Cooperation

### SOCIAL & ECONOMIC

Rwanda commemorated the thirteenth anniversary of the 1994 genocide from 7-13 April. Many of the ceremonies were centered around the burial of the remains of hundreds of victims whose detection is likely to be linked with the testimonies before *gacaca* of some of the 9,242 prisoners, released on 19 February. The national mourning week foresaw the participation of all Rwandans. On 27 March a group of parliamentarians had asked the Rwandan Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture to try to mobilize the masses to ensure large participation. Still there is widespread reluctance among the population to do so - not least because of the event's emphasis on collective Hutu guilt - thus often leaving the mourning to genocide survivors. The speech of President Kagame at Amahoro Stadium in Kigali is said to have faced a cold reception by those attending. Meanwhile students and staff of the National University of Rwanda in the Southern Province town of Butare reportedly have boycotted commemoration activities. This was seen as an expression of "genocide ideology," which allegedly predominates in southern and western parts of the country. The latter issue, linked also to the latest increase in violence against those involved in *gacaca*, echoed in many of the speeches that were held by officials at the memorial sites all across the country. It was announced that this kind of mentality would no longer be tolerated and warned that offenders would face the consequences of their wrongdoings. In light of existing repressive policies, which more or less equate genocide ideology to opinion that appears to dissent from the government line, it remains to be seen how this will translate into practice. Again, on 26 April a senatorial committee launched a report called "Rwanda: Genocide Ideology and Strategies for its Eradication." The committee confirmed the problem and recommended the creation of a national commission on genocide revisionism. Kagame

lauded the report for its credibility, which he attributed to the exclusive involvement of Rwandans who "understand" the problem and want to resolve it. On the same occasion the international community was repeatedly made responsible for both the genocide and its origins, which is supposed to be a proven strategy to raise funds as well as to silent critical voices. Accordingly Odette Nyiramirimo, chairperson of the above mentioned senatorial committee, pointed to the roots of genocide ideology in the colonial era. She further argued that its current proponents do also involve foreigners, notably representatives of international NGOs. Whether the latest grants and announcements of financial support by bi- and multi-lateral donors such as Sweden, the EU or the UK (see graph) are the result of these and similar appeals to their bad conscience is at anybody's guess. Rwanda's sponsors often refer to the country's efforts in restoring peace and stability in the region (including Sudan) or to its progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. According to André Guichaoua, the main, if not only, beneficiaries of national investment and foreign contributions are the Kigali based RPF elites. Rwanda's attainment of the lead among East African states in Information

International Assistance and Economics and Finance (weighted by IDEA scale)



Source: FAST event data

and Communication Technologies, as reported by the New Times on 25 April, coincides with a state of generalized poverty in the countryside. Guichaoua also believes that the current situation reflects a rupture with the past since the elite for the first time in the country's history consider themselves capable of becoming independent of the peasantry. This also involves constant attempts to attract foreign investment and tourists – for example, by creating local genocide museums, including the house of former President Habyarimana. The investments in ICT technology obviously connect the elite of Rwanda – a country that is a stepping stone to the mineral rich east of DRC – more with potential investors and international trade than with its own people. The enhanced connections with China should be analyzed within this context and could indicate a trend to mitigate the dependence on the USA. The ever growing gap between the urban and rural society cannot be ignored, irrespective of existing local attempts to improve the living conditions of some of the most marginalized.

A more promising move on the regional level was the reactivation on of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries on 17 April in Bujumbura, which brings together Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC. This institution will allow for the free movement of people and goods and at the same time is considered to be a key step in restoring peace and stability in the region. EU Commissioner Louis Michel enthusiastically welcomed the decision and announced a 50 million Euro grant to support its implementation.

### POLITICAL

Critical media and other civil society actors have continued to be in the crosshair of the government. On 20 April Agnès Nkusi-Uwimana, the director of *Umurabyo*, was sentenced to one year in prison and fined USD \$760 for damages. The Committee to Protect Journalists harshly condemned the judgment, which was "another troubling example of the authorities' use of charges of sectarianism and criminal libel to silence crucial journalism." On 22 March Congolese university professor Idesbald Byabuze Kataruka was declared "persona non grata" by the state prosecutor and immediately thrown out of the country. The day before he was released from prison where he had served 34 days for "endangering state security, segregation and sectarianism." During his monthly press conference, Kagame on 13 March had called on local journalists to stop discrediting their own country in the interest of anti-Rwanda foreigners. As reported by James Munyaneza, Kagame cautioned "that the period of tolerance for negative and biased reporting

against the government might at any time come to an end, and that nobody can stop the government from taking any stringent measure to ensure that that happens." Moreover the Rwandan president strongly warned government officials from revealing cabinet secrets to the press. Ironically, on the very same date *Umuseso* editor Charles Kabonero, a frequent target of the Rwandan authorities, was honored with the 2006 Golden Pen Journalist of the Year. Not surprisingly, the next day the award was declared null and void following bitter protests by some guests, including the Kigali City mayor.

The struggle to silence critical voices among civil society has been accompanied by attempts to root out diverging opinion and lacking discipline within the government's ranks. This manifests itself in various dismissals, re-elections and resignations of officials; such as on 7 March, when the cabinet nominated several new ambassadors, officers in the ministries and provincial administration, as well as judges in district courts. On 14 March in the fight against corruption, the general prosecutor informed about the follow-up to the 2005 Report by the Government Auditor who had identified widespread mismanagement and embezzlements in several state owned institutions. As a result on 28 March, the Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance and Social Welfare directed all district mayors to investigate the misappropriation of funds from the Common Development Fund. With the pardon given on 6 April to Pasteur Bizimungu, on the other hand, Kagame freed his predecessor and previous opponent who was imprisoned in 2003 for criminal enterprise, embezzlement of public funds, and inciting civil disobedience. Rwanda experts consider the release as either a political decision or a response to international pressure. Guichaoua assumes that the former president, given the luck to have his life spared, is "now permanently condemned to silence."

On the international front the relations with France have remained tense. On 18 April the Rwandan government filed a case at the International Court in The Hague, accusing France of violating international law following Jean-Louis Bruguières arrest warrant last year for nine high Rwandan officials, including Kagame. One day later, General Kayonga and Brigadier General Nziza lodged a complaint on the same issue before the Court of Justice in the Belgian capital. Rwanda hopes that the new French government will allow for a re-establishment of mutual relationships. Again, on 19 April the Brussels' Court of Justice opened the hearing of Major Ntuyahaga, who is accused of the murdering of nine Belgian soldiers at the very beginning of the 1994 genocide. The case is also expected to shed more light on the role Belgium and France played at the end of Rwanda's Second Republic.

## SECURITY

Genocide survivors are still at risk for violence. On 9 April unknown assailants threw stones at the houses of an *umudugudu* in Kabgayi accommodating some 140 genocide orphans. At the same time there were reports about individuals trying to convince others to not participate in *gacaca*. The number of such events is likely to increase as the government plans to finalize the *gacaca* process by the end of the year, which would involve the judgment of 750,000 suspects. Another issue of concern relates to the shooting of a man on 11 March in Musanze by a member of the Local Defense Unit (LDU). In view of a similar incident on 27 February in Nyange Sector, the Musanze Police Commander suspended the authorization for the LDU to carry fire arms. Yet rumors say that reprisals are being encouraged against anybody displaying dissent in the countryside, and violence against genocide survivors is being used to terrorize the population. Similarly, the release of prisoners is being interpreted by some as an aim at creating a climate of insecurity that will justify further repression.

On the regional level, the ongoing FDLR presence in eastern DRC has been the priority of Rwanda's security agenda following the launching of two bombs on 3 March on the Busasama Sector in Rubavu District, and a grenade attack on the Cyimbogo Genocide Memorial site on 23 March. Apart from numerous meetings at the national and international level, on 14 March in Kigali the member states of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission decided to compile a list of the most wanted 'criminals' involved in rebel activities in the region. These lists, tempered by certain compromises, formed the basis for a regional military action plan that was discussed at a meeting in Bujumbura on 18 April by the chiefs of defense staff from Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and Uganda. They agreed on intensifying military operations by the *Forces Armées Congolaises*, including joint excursion of their armies into eastern DRC. The latter plan was strictly rejected by the Congolese Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, already there are assumptions of Rwandan infiltration to reinforce the mixed brigades of General Nkunda, which are responsible since January for increased military activities against FDLR and their Mai-Mai allies. This has resulted in an alarming deterioration of stability in the Kivus, including growing ethnic tensions, massive human rights violations and the displacement of thousands of civilians.

## OUTLOOK

Warnings by Kagame have been taking threatening overtones. At the same time, the release of prisoners in the context of *gacaca* trials and related violence creates unrest and, in so doing, makes the stiffening stance of the government appear as an adequate response to the instability it generates. Human rights and freedom of expression should be "understood within the Rwandan context," to quote Kagame. In the current political context, the official attitude towards the press and the increased repression of any behavior that could be interpreted as an insufficient expression of enthusiasm, testify to rising tensions within the educated classes. The success of the country in the field of ICT testifies to both the current economic trends, including the market of natural resources available in DRC, and to the geopolitical strategic significance of a small country of otherwise little importance. A fragile balance is being maintained for the sake of donors and investors, while a diversification of 'international income' is sought after. The government's attitude towards NGOs is the most worrying aspect of the current evolution, as some of them remain a link between an increasingly isolated population and the outside world.

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**FAST International** is the early warning program of swisspeace, covering 25 countries/regions in Africa, Asia and Europe. Based in Bern, Switzerland, the program is funded and utilized by an international consortium of development agencies, including the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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