

Dr. Theogene Rudasingwa's letter to the BBC.

Mr. Tony Hall,
Director-General of the BBC,
Broadcasting House, Portland Place
London. W1A 1AA

October 14, 2014.

Dear Mr. Hall,

I am writing to express my deep gratitude to BBC for the courageous undertaking to produce and broadcast the documentary, Rwanda's Untold Story. As you have witnessed in the last few days since the broadcast, the documentary has provoked strong passions on either side of the Rwanda debate, thus confirming that BBC's endeavor has responded to an un-met need for dialogue and debate in contemporary Rwandan society. Despite relentless noise from President Paul Kagame's brutal dictatorship, both open and disguised, BBC should be proud that it has made a contribution to Rwanda's search for the whole truth upon which a safe and shared future for all Rwandans must be built.

Allow me to take liberty to use this thank you note to express utter dismay and grave concern about the content in a letter that a group of people calling themselves scholars, scientists, researchers, journalists and historians wrote to you on October 12, 2014. While I do not doubt their credentials, their attempt to silence the BBC and Rwandans, in defense of the Kigali regime, should be strongly condemned by all truth-loving peoples.

I cannot claim to be a distinguished scholar, scientist, researcher, journalist or historian. However, in my own country Rwanda, and about Rwandans, I do make a claim that I am a good student who has knowledge about our shared history, our present, and struggles for a secure future for all.

I am a Tutsi. My father was killed during an earlier round of violence (the Hutu Revolution of 1959) when I was a baby. Three quarters of my life I have been a refugee, first from a "Hutu" regime, and now from a "Tutsi" one. During the civil war of 1990-1994, I was an emissary of the now ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), knocking on the doors of uncaring and insensitive governments, and personalities, some of whom co-signed the shameful letter to you. I was RPF's Secretary General during the 1994 genocide, in which many of my relatives, and friends perished. I have served Rwanda as its Ambassador to the United States, and as President Paul Kagame's Chief of Staff. I was a vigorous architect and defender of the realm as defined by the RPF in post-1994 Rwanda. In short, I know what I am talking about. I am not the kind of person to deny, minimize, or revise genocide.

Since 2010, I have served Rwandans as a leader of one of the opposition groups in exile, the Rwanda National Congress (RNC). It is in this latter capacity that I have crossed the dangerously cruel ethnic divide to appreciate the immense suffering and fear that feed both the violence and dictatorship in Rwanda.

I am not therefore surprised that President Kagame's regime would react violently against BBC's Rwanda's Untold Story. The regime has methodically and persistently assassinated or jailed those who have sought to tell the truth. Deceptions and denials are the heart of undemocratic regimes, both ancient and modern. What I am yet to understand fully is what motivated the "scholars, scientists, researchers, journalists and historians" to become such forceful yet absurd apologetics of a regime that exhibits genocidal characteristics as the BBC documentary attempts to highlight. Is it ignorance? Surely not, for these are learned fellows. Is it money that the regime habitually dishes out to its apologetics? Probably not all of them, since some are honorable people. Is it ego that causes people to get mired deeper into falsehoods that have become part of a seductive industry rather than confront the truth? Only time will tell.

First, the "scholars, scientists, researchers, journalists and historians" say, "We accept and support that it is legitimate to investigate, with due diligence and respect for factual evidence, any crimes committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and to reflect on the contemporary political situation in Rwanda"

This is precisely what the BBC story tries to tell. It tells the story of the shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane that triggered the genocide and massacres; the Robert Gersony report that was shelved in a conspiratorial manner; the Kibeho massacres; the horrendous human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo; the incarceration of political leaders who call for accountability; the assassination and assassination attempts on political opponents whom the regime believes have a credible story to tell; the protection of the Kagame regime from accountability by the U.K. and U.S. governments; the marginalization or silencing of international prosecutors who would have investigated the regime's crimes; and, the scandalous towing of the Kigali regime's narrative that is all too obvious in the international system.

The authors of the letter should tell us if they, individually or collectively, ever investigated the crimes committed by the Kagame RPF regime. They conveniently picked what they could brandish against those who call for the whole truth, in an effort to intimidate them into silence. By calling them supporters and collaborators of convicted genocidaires, or apologetics of "Hutu Power", the authors of the letter are recycling an old intimidation method of the regime that has worked for the last twenty years but which inevitably draws close to expiry.

Second, on the question of numbers of Tutsi who were killed during the genocide I am not persuaded to agree with the figure of 200, 000 given by the American Professors. At the same time, post-1994 history was written by the victorious Tutsi RPF, which had an obvious interest in giving its own version of the high number of victims, (800,000-1 million), which the guilty international community was compelled to accept as gospel truth. Notably, the authors do not even talk about Hutu who were killed before, during and after the genocide. Do the authors subscribe to the Kagame regime view that all Hutu are genocidaires collectively, for whom there should be no sympathy and no justice? The American Professors in the BBC story give a number of 800,000. This is not cast in stone, and is debatable like

the number of Tutsi deaths. Nobody should minimize the Tutsi deaths or the Hutu deaths.

Rwandans will decisively and finally put these matters to rest as a society when we seek the truth freely, candidly, and without the obstruction by vested interests of a state held hostage by small cliques. The whole truth should enable all Rwandans to build an authentic and sustainable unity and reconciliation, not based on cyclical retribution, but all embracing justice. Otherwise, the competition as to who died more (Hutu or Tutsi) is a meaningless race to mutually assured destruction.

Third, on the question of the numbers of the Interahamwe militia who participated in the killings, I wonder how this can be relevant. For Rwandans who went through the horrors of 1994, both Hutu and Tutsi, the agonizing remembrance of the unimaginable violence unleashed by hordes of militia is substantive proof that this was lethal power. The BBC documentary, in its opening moments captures the agony of the victims, as they are hacked to death by this militia. So what if they were 5,000, 10, 1000, 30,000? For the American Professors, and the authors of the letter trading polemics on this matter, I would say this is not time well spent. The militia had to be defeated militarily. I am glad they did. Unfortunately, the military victors of 1994 went on a killing spree in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo that is yet to be accounted for. That should be a subject of urgent interest rather than counting the number of militia that were involved in the genocidal madness.

Fourth, it is on the shooting down of the Habyarimana plane that the authors of the letter to you show their true bias in favor of the Kagame regime. Citing Judge Marc Trevidic, the authors pretend that the investigation has been concluded, and that it exonerated Paul Kagame from the responsibility for the epic act that triggered the genocide. That is a shameful lie. For us who know the facts about the matter, we have testified and others will testify in the investigation. Ultimately, nothing Kagame and his apologetics will say can erase the fact that Kagame ordered the shooting down of the plane in which two sitting African Heads of State and all their entourage died. His utter disregard for Tutsi and Hutu lives and his push for getting to power by any means possible should not minimize those who took advantage of the situation to commit the crime of genocide. The whole truth may finally be revealed in a post-Kagame era since he has invested substantial resources to obstruct accountability, and has mobilized powerful friends in the international system to protect him. Paul Kagame is a factor in the Tutsi genocide. He is the main culprit in the terrorist act in the shooting down of the plane.

Finally, the authors of the letter have betrayed their professions by insulting the BBC that by "broadcasting this documentary the BBC has been recklessly irresponsible" and that "the programme has "fuelled genocide denial" "emboldened the génocidaires, all their supporters and those who collaborate with them." This is a language that does not befit scholars, scientist, diplomats, journalist and historians. Such noble professions have throughout history risked on the side of freedom, justice, innovation, and the rule of law against what often was conventional wisdom. Many did perish rather than compromise with the deceptions

of the status quo. The authors have chosen a safer route with a rotten and dying regime. They have deliberately decided to demonize Jane Corbin, John Conroy, and the BBC just as perpetrators of genocide do. Where is the patience and tolerance for different opinions? Where is the intellectual rigor, honesty, and sense of duty on matters that touch the millions of Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi? It is, in fact, the authors of this letter that are encouraging the Kagame regime to run faster in its trajectory to human rights abuses, war, and possibility of genocide: its denials, targeting groups, dehumanizing groups of people, polarization of the population, organizing killers, and persecution of victims. In the past its victims were predominantly Hutu. Now, paradoxically, the regime has descended on those Tutsi it claims to have saved in 1994.

In conclusion, allow me to quote a famous American scholar, John Rawls, on the price and requirements of truth and justice:

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests.”
— John Rawls, A Theory of Justice

BBC has done a great service to all Rwandans by provoking a debate that cannot take place within Rwanda’s repressive state, and which Rwandans in diaspora can only participate in at the risk of death. The authors of the arrogant protest note to BBC have a luxury that most Rwandans are yet to gain as their right. Rwanda’s Untold Story has once again proved that BBC’s reputation as a credible partner in the search for truth and justice is an enduring one.

I challenge those making loud noise against BBC to an international debate on Rwanda. Invited to such an international conference will be BBC journalists, international experts on Rwanda, the Government of Rwanda, its supporters and collaborators, as well as Rwandans of all walks of life. Perhaps, through that Rwandans and partners can begin to have a civil and constructive dialogue to own a difficult past and present, even as they shape a common future, one step at a time. Short of that, Rwanda now moves to a period of rapid escalation. And, judging from Rwanda’s history, that is bad news.

Sincerely,

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USA