

Dear all,

You are kindly invited to sign this petition in support of the whole team of BBC journalists broadcasting in Kinyarwanda. The petition is addressed to the BBC leadership.

Rwandese Civil Society living in Belgium (SOCIRWA)

From: SOCIRWA

Dear: Mr. Richard Sambrook, Director, BBC Global News Direction Group,
Mr. Peter Horrocks, Director, BBC World Service & BBC World Service Accounting Officer,
Mr. Jerry Timmins, Head of Africa and Middle East Region, BBC World Service,

THIS PETITION IS IN SUPPORT OF THE WHOLE JOURNALISTS TEAM OF BBC-GAHUZAMIRYANGO AND AGAINST THE DEFAMATION AND RELENTLESS HARASSMENT FROM THE RWANDAN GOVERNEMENT THAT BBC JOURNALISTS ARE SUFFERING.

Following the defamation and relentless harassment against the journalists of BBC-Gahuzamiryango by the Rwandan government which decided to suspend BBC Radio in Kinyarwanda from 25th April 2009, we, members of Rwandan Civil Society in Belgium, decided to launch this petition based on the reactions we received from our correspondents from inside Rwanda who have requested anonymity for safety reasons. We thus would like to share and address you their concern in 3 points:

1. Disappointment by the Rwandan Government

The listeners of BBC-Gahuzamiryango:

- are deeply shocked and surprised by the false accusations of the Rwandan government against the BBC in general and its journalists broadcasting in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda in particular of being disregard “*for Rwanda’s unity and reconciliation efforts*”.
- are deeply disappointed by the defamation by the Rwandan government against responsible, independent and critical journalists as negationists, revisionists and divisionnists, with the sole aim of distracting the international community from the crimes committed by the RPF and, from the French and Spanish international war-crimes warrants issued against high level officials of the RPF.
- are exhausted by the hostility of the Rwandan government against the independent press what has pushed some newspapers into closure.
- condemn the favouritism by the Rwandan government of the state-owned media such as Radio Rwanda, “Imvaho nshya”, ... against the responsible, independent and impartial media such as BBC, Voice of America, Umuseso,...
- denounce the hidden agenda of the Rwandan government consisting in elimination of a responsible and independent press able to offer a voice to the opponent parties that may come back to the current regime unpunished crimes.

2. Support to the journalists of BBC-Gahuzamiryango

The listeners of BBC-Gahuzamiryango :

- would like to express their fully support to BBC and its all journalists without exception in this situation of defamation against them.
- are impressed by the courage of BBC journalists of having resisted to relentless harassment from the high level officials of the Rwandan government.
- express their satisfaction with the contribution of the BBC and its journalists to the reconciliation through their different programs not only those broadcasted in Kinyarwanda such as “IMVO

N’IMVANO”, “URUNANA”, ... but also those broadcasted in other languages such as “HARD TALK”.

- express their fully gratitude to the BBC team (BBC-GAHUZAMIRYANGO) for their contribution in reunification of families separated by the war from 1994 until now.
- are in support of BBC broadcasting in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi independent news from the Great Lakes region.

3. Call to action by the BBC leadership

The listeners of BBC-Gahuzamiryango :

- are worried about the possible definitive closure of one of the seldom independent press in Rwanda namely BBC-Gahuzamiryango.
- are urging the BBC leadership to have courage of resisting the pressure from the Rwandan Government and stay responsible, impartial and independent in order to serve the public and not personal or oligarchical interests of the current Rwandan regime.
- request the BBC leadership to support its journalists without exception and to do everything in order to resume unconditionally the BBC broadcasting services in Kinyarwanda.
- emphasize the importance of a responsible, impartial and independent press to ensure development, democracy and reconciliation in Rwanda.
- reiterate their support to the journalists of BBC without exception for their, excellent, professional and impartial job.

Deeply hoping that you will make suitable decisions to preserve the BBC-Gahuzamiryango.

Sincerely yours,

SOCIRWA

List of petitioners and their comments :
