RWANDA

Harassed to Harass in the name of dignity.

'Young People as a tool to oppress the population'

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I

Acronyms And Acknowledgement

Acronyms

- **GCRHR:** Global Campaign for Rwandan Human Rights.
- **RPF:** Rwandan Patriotic Front.
- **RPA:** Rwandan Patriotic Army.
- **DMI:** Department of Military of Investigations.
- **NISS**: National Intelligence and Security Services.

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Our special thanks also go to our various researchers and interviewers who braved the odds and conducted interviews in extremely challenging conditions.

II

Introduction And Background

In the last 5 years, we have observed the number of the Rwandan youth, aged between 18 – 28 years old, seeking asylum outside Rwanda, including UK, France, Belgium and USA increasing rapidly. While the quest by the poor countries' youth for better life conditions has become a general condition observable across the many parts of Africa over the last years, what was very surprising though for the case of Rwanda is that the vast majority of those young Rwandan asylum seekers make a homogenous group of youth who had been sent to study abroad through the Rwandan government or donor support scholarship schemes.

It became increasingly obvious that these young people were taking advantage of the opportunity to leave Rwanda with secretively hatched plans to never go back after their studies. Unlike asylum seekers from other African countries fleeing abject poverty, the Rwandan youth mostly came from upper middle families. In this respect, it is hard to imagine why they desperately rush to leave their country and with no plan to return home. Especially that the prospect of accessing good employment opportunities in Rwanda, with a booming economy, was warranted.

At the same time, the neighbouring Uganda happened to be receiving an increasing number of young people leaving Rwanda, some claiming to go for studies in Ugandan educational institutions while others appeared to be mere economic migrants seeking for jobs. In some extreme cases, some Rwandan youth, notably young girls, could even be found connected to active commercial sex rings based in Uganda. All in all, the Rwanda youth decided to leave the country and settled

outside of it with no immediate plans to return home.

In 2007, there were cases in the UK in which young Rwandan people in their 20's, amid school trips across the UK, took extra-ordinary risks by ditching this prestigious visit and vanishing so to avoid going back to Rwanda. Later on, they eventually applied for asylum in UK. When we interviewed them later to better understand what reasons pushed them to make such risky decisions, we discovered that there could be deep - rooted and complex issues among the Rwandan youth. We concluded that if carefully assessed, we could most probably uncover some realities which may shed light on the logic behind such behaviors, increasingly rampant and difficult to grasp at first sight.

Methodological considerations for our investigation.

We decided to undertake an in-depth investigation so we can come up with a conclusive picture and

the motives behind a number of factors, embedded in the current situation in Rwanda, that compel the youth to flee their country.

As part of the investigation, our interviews targeted indiscriminately young people studying and working in Rwanda on condition of anonymity for their safety.

We also interviewed young international students benefiting from the Rwandan or donors' scholarship schemes to study in the UK and the US as well as young Rwandans seeking asylum in the UK, Belgium, France, Ireland and the USA. For the purposes of complete sampling considerations, we also interviewed the Rwandan youth living and studying in Uganda.

The population age of our sample group varied between 19 to 35 years of which the majority averaged between 24 – 26 years old.

To increase the reliability of our research findings, we contrasted the observations collected on the youth

group against statements from former and current officials of the Rwandan government occupying different levels of the public administration. The investigation activity spanned 10 months and a total of 43 responders could be interviewed.

III

Harassment In The Name Of Dignity

The National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) have been forcibly, often times overtly and in some other cases covertly , engaging young people to actively participate in activities aimed at inducing and shaping their beliefs of the Rwandan Patriot Front regime with an aim to paint and instill in them a shining image about the country they had to sell at the international level. Alongside such forced mind control programs, disguised as innocuous civic education programs, the selected youth entered a secretive tacit contract to spy on the Rwandan population, not only in Rwanda but the world

over, for the benefit of the ruling regime.

The result findings from our investigation proved that almost every young person who participated in these activities could display severe stress abnormalities at varying degrees as well as downheartedness that conditioned them to live in extreme fear of the authority while, for many, these mind control experiences have left on them significant psychological scars the magnitude of which is yet to be exhaustively ascertained.

We discovered and catalogued various methods that the Rwandan Patriotic Front led authorities particularly Intelligence Services are using to coerce young people into taking various actions, conspicuously harmful in blatant violation of established laws, both at home and at international level.

According to a former official in the former ministry of youth and sport, who spoke to us as part of this investigation, the widespread strategy used consists of involving as many young people as possible with a

particular focus on young people aged 16 to 30 years old. In line with the RPF internal strategy, this age group forms the ideal cluster for it never experienced the civil war of the 1990's nor can it ever be found connected in one way or other to the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Therefore, molding new beliefs into such groups is easier because any belief they might have about those events is based on what they have been taught or read and not what they experienced. It's understood that such experiences are hard to influence and change.

In this framework, the strategy is to condition anew these young people's beliefs through hammering the RPF favorable ideology day and night. As a result of the new forged beliefs, the young people become the staunch supporters, promoters, defenders of the RPF ideology. Considering that the targeted group represents just more than 40% of the general population and constitutes more than 60% of the voting category among the population, it appears that these programs were designed and implemented to act as a warrant of sustainability warrant for

the ruling regime and to mitigate any threat to its replacement.

In order to keep the flares of new RPF forged beliefs burning in the hearts of the ''young converts", RPF controlled and funded media produces well designed propagandas. As such, the RPF cadres and officials manage to keep these youth population under control, influence and submission to the policies and agendas of the ruling regime. At the same time, any controversial information that may tend to view the new forged beliefs questionable is brutally ridiculed and negatively labelled. Worse still, there were cases where people could be falsely accused of harboring a genocide ideology simply because they refused to adhere to such propagandas. In extreme cases, people were jailed and other assassinated.

Sadly, the aggressive implementation of such mind control agendas for the survival of the ruling system has been accompanied with political brutality reaching unprecedented scale in the Rwandan history. As of today, it is no longer a secret that whoever dares to challenge any of the officially approved RPF ruling

ideology or criticizes the Rwandan government's actions is brutally criticized, demonized and labelled rather as a terrorist, genocide supporter, genocide denier, enemy of peace, genocide ideologist, etc… If such a person lives in Rwanda he or she is arrested, harassed, marginalized, forced into exile or made to disappear.

IV

RPF youth-oriented Mind Control Programs disguised as Civil Education Camps.

On completion of their standard secondary school training, the Rwandan youth must forcefully enroll in a two-month intensive residential training camp that is commonly labelled "civic education " and translated in the local language as "Ingando". The Government of Rwanda defines it as a ''culture - based channel that helps mentor Rwandans on many different things, including re-education on the good cultural values that should characterize Rwandan citizens".

On the menu of this training, young people are taught the history of Rwanda, the heroic liberation war led by the RPF and RPA and which culminated in the overturn of a bad and discriminating political history of Rwanda. Across these programs, the RPF cadres keep on reiterating the epic bravery of both political and military leadership that managed to achieve that. Those youth are also taught about ''cultural values". This generally captures the provision of services to their country and pledging allegiance to their leaders and Rwandan Patriot Front, through a spirit of devotion and sacrifice. They also receive military training, including the use of different light and heavy weapons, basic military and survival tactics, military parading, espionage including information gathering and camouflage.

The investigation carried out by our organization established that most of the young people who participated in this program reported to have been severely impaired by these forced education programs. As a matter of fact, evidence from the

specialized experts practicing in the field revealed that most of them displayed more or less severe forms of trauma that could only explained by the shocking experiences they were exposed to during social behavior change as well as military trainings in these camps. . Simply because the majority of youth participated in these programs against their will and that they feared punishments resulting in their refusal to abide by the rules imposed onto them. In fact, it can indeed be proved that unusual and cruel punishment were reserved for those who would not comply with orders to serve the country when required.

In these youth camp trainings, young people would be split into groups based on their ethnic backgrounds despite the government's official claim that ethnic differences and derived social benefits associated to them thereof are no longer existent in Rwanda. As a separate entity, the Tutsi cluster was taught and subject to increased indoctrination that they should unify, strive to become stronger patriots, fearless and always ready to fight for and protect

their country and their ethic group and that, above all, they should control those who are prone to commit another genocide.

The Tutsi ethnic group formed a standalone group in the training as they were relentlessly told they were a "special ethnic group", wiser, more capable and gifted. They were told they had a special call to prevent their power from ever falling into their enemies because it was inherited from the old kings of ancient Rwanda, the ones referred to as the Nyiginya Kingdom which tends to brag they could keep power for as many as 400 years in the past.

For the Hutu ethnic group, they teach that any accusations pointing fingers to the RFP regime as the responsible for the genocide of Hutus should be dismissed as denial of the Tutsi genocide and that they must be vehemently opposed and fought. The hutu group is therefore subjected to an aggressive and effective brain washing training program aimed at turning them into defeaters of their own ethnic group which may

harbor the hutu genocide ideology as a unifying political tool to rally the hutu populations. In this regard, the Hutus youth are taught to denounce and report such declarations to the law enforcing authorities.

They tell to these youth that if there might have been any hutu killed by RPF, then they should have been targeted as part of the genocidal militia. With regard to allegations of many Rwandans, mostly belonging to the hutu ethnic groups, illegally imprisoned or harassed by the authorities, they teach them these people are convicted due to crimes they committed to the Rwandan community and due to being responsible or colluding with the enemies of the state.

In contrast, there are young people, from both ethnic groups, with personal, family or close friends whose experiences of the RPF misdeeds is in stark contradiction of what they teach and force them to believe. This last category of youth is the one most suffering from severe distress as a result of these trainings. There have been reports of several

mental breakdowns, suicides and attempts to commit suicide by youth who participated in these youth camps.

Rwandan health service officials refute the direct link between those civic education programs and levels of traumatic experiences displayed by those young people having attended those training camps. Instead they rather tend to consider the abnormal stress cases observed to as severe post-traumatic stress disorders they experienced or their families experienced during the 1994 genocide.

The experience of Kalisa (an alias to protect his identity), who participated in the youth camps, is quite revealing. At the time of our investigation he accepted to testify on what he went through in these RPF training programs designed to change the mindset of Rwandan youth. Kalisa told our researcher that *''These camps were designed to brainwash us in denying our experiences and history by embracing and injecting into our minds RPF doctrines meant to transform us into new underground and remote controllable soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Front"*.

Umwari (also an alias to protect her identity) is a second such experience, like Kalisa. She confessed that *''as a genocide survivor, I expected these camps to develop a strong sense of belonging, harmonious living, reconciliation and values of respect among the youth. Instead, I found them to foster suspicion, develop prejudice, establish fear and seem to incite conflict instead of sustaining peace"*

Regarding the military training component of these RPF civic education programs, it should be stressed that military service in Rwanda is not compulsory, according to Rwandan laws. However, apparently no youth can be admitted at any public university or higher education institution without showing a certificate proving that they have participated in the civic education training at the end of their secondary school. The civic education programs in Rwanda involve basic military training including light and medium weaponry handling, military tactics, intelligence gathering and camouflage. Such trainings can't be said to be mock military exercises. Rather,

there are genuine physically exhausting exercises imposing the criteria of basic physical fitness prerequisites to be met. More importantly, such exercises incur a good deal of stress and may tend to exhaust young people especially those who are enrolled by force. This is the most strenuous part of the Civic Education programs. The level of stress incurred by such exercises is beyond imagination, especially for those youth for which a military career was not an option in the first place.

As such, it looks as if the public sector employers were briefed to require young people or graduates applying for jobs to present proof of having participated in youth training camps.

For those youth people who opt to dodge the civic education camps, they find themselves in a situation where they have no chance to access any public higher education or employment opportunities. This tends to make participation in these camps an unavoidable forceful predicament for them.

Depending of their life experience, the level of previous knowledge acquired in the political history of Rwanda, the level of persuasion or conversion by these trainings may be different. All in all, some young people became more influenced than others. Due to intimidation and the state of extreme fear in which the young people undergo the training, all participating youth can't but only submit to the orders which is usually wrongly interpreted as a willful approval and adherence to the programs delivered.

Despite that the government of Rwanda officially claims to be a democratic state promoting a multiparty political system, youth participating in these civic education camps are taught to espouse and defend the only RPF ruling party's ideology. . They are taught it is the only one best fit to ''to sustain peace and prevent genocide and prolong the development and peace achieved" in Rwanda.

These civil education camps for Rwandan youth are organized each year and take place at the Busogo ''Solidarity" camps, located in the northern

province of Rwanda. There were cases of disappearance of young people after they had participated in such training camps. Most parents and relatives of the disappeared young people became wary and reluctant to report them to the relevant authorities for the fear of being considered as critics or suspicious to the authorities.

Since 2007, it is an open secret that those missing young people were in reality sent to join the rebel groups that were supported by the Rwandan government in D.R. Congo operations to plunder minerals or to wreak havoc.

The testimony collected from the Rwandan youth interviewed concurs with the United Nations sanctioned report established on behalf of the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee on DR Congo. The Report concluded that Rwanda was responsible for supplying child soldiers to rebels operating in Nord – Kivu regions of the D.R. of Congo in the context of the 2008 conflict. According to one young man who managed to escape the rebellion,

those who were sent to join the rebel groups were selected based on three main criteria: Kiswahili language skills, minimum level attained at secondary school, being of poor family background.

V

Training Of Confidential Rpf Informers And Informal Intelligent Agents

There are non-official and confidential residential trainings that are held in secret at Nasho in Eastern of Rwanda. Trainees are recruited among newly graduated university students. They are recruited by recommendation from various networks of trusted officials of RPF and NISS agents.

When potential trainees are identified they are contacted through anonymous private calls and ordered to present themselves in a confidential meeting in which they are informed about the training they are

required to undergo for a period of a year. They are also ordered to keep secret all information about their training, including the training locations. The targeted recruits have no right to refuse the proposal.

As part of their training, they are trained in advanced military methodology, communication and persuasive skills, various methods to identity an enemy of the state, and spying methodologies.

When they complete their course they are placed within various government departments and agencies working in different sections at different levels. In additional to their official roles for which they are employed, they also have particular tasks of secretly monitoring the work colleagues (at all levels) and produce daily or weekly reports to the RPF secretariat, DMI or NISS. They are also tasked with developing false accusations against their colleagues whom RPF or NISS has decided to get rid of ino order to either sack them from their official positionsor to prosecute them.

This is usually the case when any of employees in a monitored employment place is suspected of harboring negative critical views of the authorities, or having connections with the opponents of the RPF Government. This is also the case whenever an employment opportunity for a more connected RPF influential member must be created to take over the position of a lesser important RPF member.

Due to high levels of acute poverty and low employment opportunities, to be part of the those selected networks which attend such secretive training for the purpose of becoming underground RPF spying and information gathering agents, looks like a privilege and a pathway to social economic success. As a result, a high number of new graduates from all universities tend to caress and nurture such dreams. Especially for those youth from poorer family backgrounds with less or not at all any connections to the established system. From a mere practical and opportunistic perspective, participating in that training and being an active member of those networks becomes a de facto warrant to secure an employment

in the government apparatus.. However, with time, it was found out that the most common characteristic to those youth having attended those trainings was the dream and compelling desire to leave the country by all means.

VI

Diaspora Youth and Student programs.

The Rwandan youth living abroad are divided into a variety of social economic categories. Some live as political refugees while others live with asylum seeker status. A good number of other have acquired double citizenship status while some other possess temporary students' resident authorizations. All in all, they group together to form a homogeneous group of Rwandan they easily refer to as the Rwandan diaspora in exile. Each year, the Rwandan diaspora attends diaspora youth camps that are organized during the summer holidays in Rwanda.

An attempt to organize such a diaspora camp at European level in the UK between 17th to 22nd July 2011, flopped after Rwandan refugees and refugee groups in the UK raised concerns about motives behind those camps.

Also, Rwandan embassies and High Commissions organize different meetings and trainings for young people living abroad. The diaspora youth and student program aims to sensitize and empower the Rwandan youth to actively participate in activities that raise the profile and brand the positive image of the Rwandan government abroad while vehemently opposing any criticism of the country.

Within these trainings, the diaspora youth undergoes a systematic information and awareness raising sessions with specific activities designed as methods to teach them how to contribute to and strengthen the Diaspora youth and students programs. They are also required to report to embassies and High Commissions information about any Rwandans who are seeking asylum or refuge in foreign countries. They

are also required to report any opposition groups and their activities.

The diaspora training usually focuses on utilization of and harnessing the social networking media to promote Rwanda, through identification of articles criticizing the Rwandan government in a bid to systematically challenge them.. Young people in the diaspora particularly those on government scholarships are in some cases requested to demonstrate what they have done in that regard. They are also advised to use aliases on social networking account names if they do not have confidence to debate or exchange publically on internet on matters that concern Rwanda.

Selected young Rwandans in The UK and USA are placed as interns in public relation companies hired by The Rwandan Government but based in the UK and USA. These internship programs are aimed to develop and strengthen a powerful and ruthless army of propaganda agents working for Kigali.

Young people in diaspora particularly students on Rwandan government or donors scholarships, informed us that it's under the pressure of the Rwandan embassies abroad that they participate in those activities. Some students also mentioned that the high frequency of those activities are in conflict of interest with their education programs.

VII

Organizations and institutions involved and their roles.

In order to effectively implement the above mentioned secret program's activities, a number of various public, private and independent organizations, institutions as well as businesses were found to be working hand in hand.

Although the list may not be exhaustive as of now but the following were found to be highly involved and active:

- **The Rwandan Patriotic Front Secretariat:** The general secretary of the Rwandan ruling party is in charge of developing the whole

national strategies of youth education programs.

- **Imbuto Foundation:** This charity was founded and is managed by the Rwandan first lady. On its website (www.imbutofoundation.org), it states that their vision is of a nation of empowered and dignified Rwandans. Its role is to identify and work with young talents, particularly in areas of leadership. Imbuto is a Kinyarwanda name meaning 'a seed'. The foundation searches for and develops young people with a" leadership seed."

- **National Youth Council:** The council develops activities that aim to encourage young people to participate in social and economic development.

- **Ministry of youth and ICT :** (formerly ministry of youth, culture and sport): This ministry is in charge of organizing and planning genocide memorial events and collaborating with other services to identity suitable youth

for the scholarships and suitable young people for confidential RPF informers and informal intelligent agents training.

- **National Unity and Reconciliation Commission:** This commission has the overall responsibilities for coordinating civil education camps for young people.

- **Ministry of defense:** This ministry organizes and provides all military related training that are part of the civil education camps for young people as well as confidential RPF informers and informal intelligent agents training.

- **National Intelligence and Security Services:** These services assess and provide intelligence related training as part of Confidential RPF informers and informal intelligence agents. These services also provide monitoring and guidance for trained informers placed within various government services.

- **Diaspora General Directorate:** This is a department of ministry of foreign affairs. It coordinates all activities and programs that are designed for young people in the diaspora and those who are students on the government sponsored scholarships. This department works closely with embassies and high commissions in countries where Rwanda is represented.

VIII

Recommendations by our organization GCRHR:

1. We urge the Rwandan government to end all actions that coerce young people into activities that have no regard for their rights, healthy well-being and safety.

2. We urge the Rwandan government to promote activities that foster reconciliation and living in harmony among young people in order to develop sustainable peace and harmony living between communities.

3. We urge the Rwandan government to end coercing young people into participating in

illegal activities such as spying be it at home or at international level and fighting activities in illegal wars D.R Congo.

4. We urge the Rwandan government to promote and implement equality in accessing all social economic benefits and opportunities.

5. We urge the Rwandan government to provide assistance by mobilizing the needed specialized health services to support young people who are suffering as result of participating in various forced actions, in the likes of the mind control programs aimed at influencing youth to become the RPF freedom fighters.

6. We urge countries in which Rwandan young people are seeking asylum to assess their applications considering their circumstances, special protection needs, and impacts caused by their experiences. In case their asylum cases do not fall within 1959 UN Refugee convention, protection under human right should be considered.