



EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE

## RDR

Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda  
Rassemblement pour le Retour des Réfugiés et la Démocratie au Rwanda  
Ihuliro Liharanira Itahuka ry'Impunzi na Demokarasi mu Rwanda

Pour un Peuple Reconcilié dans un Etat de droit - For a Reconciled People in a Rule of Law  
Duharanire Ubwiyunge bw'Abanyarwanda mu Gihugu cyubahiriza Amategeko

PRESS RELEASE NO. 6/2001

### THE RDR REJECTS THE «NO PARTY» ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN RWANDA

Persisting in violations of Rwandan citizens' rights to freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, expression, movement and the right to take part in the government directly or through freely chosen representatives as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter for Human and Peoples' Rights, the dictatorial government of Rwanda led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) is holding on 6 and 7 March 2001 non-free and unfair municipal elections under the new brand of tyranny known as the «no party» system imported in Rwanda from Uganda by the RPF. These municipal elections are a continuation of «no party» elections initiated in March 1999 at cell and sector levels. On behalf of the oppressed people of Rwanda struggling for the revival of republican democracy, freedom and justice, the Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR) strongly condemns once again the Rwandan government's violations of civil and political rights by the continuous imposition of the «no party» electoral system upon the people of Rwanda in the unique purpose of prolonging indefinitely the RPF's monopoly on power.

When the RPF seized power in July 1994, it formed a government including leaders of its sympathetic factions in other political parties existing at that time. On 24 November 1994, the RPF signed a protocol of understanding on transitional institutions with its supportive factions of the political parties (MDR, PDC, PL, PSR, PSD and UDPR) rewarded with posts in RPF-controlled institutions and banned political party activities for all organisations except for itself. This banning has closed all lawful modes of expressing opposition to government policies and dictatorship by argument and legitimate persuasion. Political parties inside Rwanda exist only in name; political pluralism is apparent but not real. Political parties are not allowed to campaign, to designate or back candidates in elections, to issue membership cards nor to hold public meetings, gatherings or rallies. All candidates in elections are designated by the government and are forced to stand as individuals and not as representatives of political parties. Voter's registration is mandatory and election is compulsory. Citizens have no alternative political programmes to choose from and vote for, they are only asked to reveal their preferences among government-designated candidates. In true democratic elections, candidates for election should freely be either representatives of political parties or independents without any coercion. Every citizen should enjoy fully the option to exercise his right to stand for and be elected at any level of government. The Rwandan citizens should have the right to elect their leaders at all levels through universal, direct, free, equal and secret ballot. The «no party» system does not guarantee free and fair competition for political leadership; it is far from true democracy and political enfranchisement.

Voters in Rwanda's municipal elections will choose at sector level three councillors (including a representative of the population, a representative of women and a representative of youth) among government-designated candidates. Elected sector's councillors over all commune's

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sectors will form the commune's council. The commune's council, joined by a certain number of administrative authorities elected at sector and cell levels in March 1999, will then constitute the commune's electoral college which will choose the commune's executive committee composed of 5 persons: the new mayor, a person responsible for economic affairs, a person responsible for social affairs, a person responsible for the promotion of women and a person responsible for the youth, sports and culture. Ironically, this complex electoral system replicates on the local level the electoral system for parliamentary elections used under «one party» regime of the late General Juvenal Habyarimana military opposed by the RPF. Under the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND)'s «one-party» regime, the population had to elect Members of Parliament from the list of government-designated candidates. Mayors, or commune burgomasters, and provincial governors were appointed directly by the President since mid 1970's. The election of burgomasters could be considered as a break from the past but it is only a cosmetic change which extends to the municipal level an old method in the «one-party» system. The RDR finds it deplorable that some democratic countries have financed elections which violate basic human rights OF THE Rwandan citizens and institutionalize dictatorship. By ignoring abuses of civil and political rights associated with the «no-party» system, some members of the international community undermine the notion of the universality of human right. It is morally unacceptable that human rights be ignored in the case of Rwanda and be used as sticks in foreign policy against other governments in the African Great Lakes region or elsewhere.

The ban on political activities has forced non-submissive democratic political organizations to go underground, establish their headquarters in exile or take up arms. The reactions of Rwandan and Ugandan governments have been always the same: rejection of any dialogue with political opposition, recourse to government's violence and show of force. Instead of solving the root causes of the conflicts in their countries, Rwandan and Ugandan military leaders have embarked on a terrorist campaign of displays of their military might in order to persuade other countries of their armies' invincibility and that any resistance to their will is pointless and brings swift and ruinous retribution in the forms of sabotage, their sponsorship of anti-government banditry or rebel movements and, in the last resort, invasion. In these governments' demonology, all proponents of democracy opposing the current ruling cliques are globally portrayed as bandits without a cause, corrupt or incompetent individuals or, in the case of Rwanda, Hutu genocidaires. Internally, people are bombarded with government's lies in the columns of government-controlled press and air-waves of public radio and television stations. Dictatorship and government's violence in Rwanda and Uganda have generated civil wars and disrupted the whole of the African Great Lakes region. It is morally unacceptable to call for dialogue between the Congolese government and its political opposition to pave the way to true democracy in Congo and, at the same time, to support and aid dictatorial regimes in Rwanda and Uganda. The RDR calls on the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity, the European Union, all democratic countries and freedom-loving people and organizations to condemn the «no party» system of elections and to condition all future aid flows to Rwanda and Uganda on steps taken on the road to true democracy.

Done in Montreal on 6 March 2001

For the RDR

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