

Réseau international des Femmes pour la Démocratie et la Paix asbl
(*RifDP*)

International Women's Network for Democracy and Peace asbl (*IwnDP*)

Internationale Netwerk van Vrouwen voor Democratie en Vrede (*InvDV*)

Press release

The International Women's Network for Democracy and Peace alerts national and international public opinion to the arbitrary detention, inhuman treatment, and systematic denial of fundamental rights suffered by Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza in Rwandan prisons.

While the Rwandan judiciary is expected to rule on January 16, 2026, on the illegality of her arrest, no guarantee of independence or impartiality can reasonably be expected. On the contrary, all indications suggest that this trial is part of a political strategy to neutralize a major opposition figure.

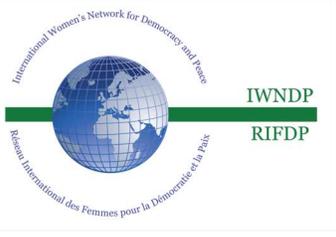
For years, this case has been marked by an accumulation of abuses of power, serious judicial irregularities, and blatant violations of international law. The silence of the international community in the face of these abuses only reinforces the impunity of the Rwandan authorities.

We urge all authorities with the power to act — national, regional, or international — to intervene without delay to compel the Rwandan authorities to respect their human rights obligations and to guarantee Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza full exercise of her civil, political, and judicial rights.

The facts are damning.

Between 2018 and 2024, senior officials of the Rwandan regime, including the President of the Republic, publicly multiplied threats, insinuations, and hate speech against Ms. Ingabire, thereby preparing the ground for her judicial persecution.

In 2025, Rwandan judges ordered an investigation targeting Ms. Ingabire by linking her to a case that the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had clearly judged to be contrary to international human rights law. This decision demonstrates the Rwandan authorities' open contempt for international human rights protection mechanisms. Ms. Ingabire was arrested on June 19, 2025, and placed in detention under conditions equivalent to punitive solitary confinement. Since then, she has been unable to communicate with her family and has been denied effective access to her international



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legal team, in direct violation of the Mandela Rules and universal minimum standards applicable to persons deprived of liberty.

The Rwanda Bar Association (RBA) arbitrarily refused her Kenyan lawyer the right to practice in Rwanda, invoking the principle of reciprocity, despite its own regulations exempting lawyers from the East African Community from this requirement. This refusal constitutes a serious violation of the right to defense and a clear breach of the East African Community Common Market Protocol.

Despite a constitutional appeal pending before the Supreme Court challenging the legality of her indictment and detention, the lower court deliberately refused to suspend proceedings, in violation of Rwandan law governing judicial jurisdiction. This represents a judicial overreach aimed at keeping Ms. Ingabire detained at all costs.

The rejection of her request for release on bail — even when the prosecution failed to meet legal deadlines for filing an indictment — illustrates a clear intention to punish without trial.

Ms. Ingabire is detained under conditions that seriously endanger her safety and dignity, notably by being placed with a detainee convicted of murder, in violation of basic prison law, and through arbitrary deprivation of fundamental rights, including access to medical care and religious practice. Furthermore, the appointment of the same judges to both investigate and try her case confirms the total absence of fair trial guarantees and reveals the political instrumentalization of the Rwandan justice system.

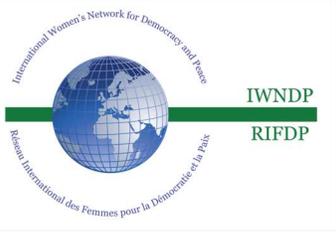
Faced with this intolerable situation, we refuse to remain silent.

The detention of Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza directly engages the responsibility of the Rwandan authorities and calls upon the conscience of the international community.

Who is Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza

An icon of female leadership in Africa, she is a symbol of the struggle for democracy, human rights, and inclusive development in Rwanda.

Ms. Ingabire was living in the Netherlands for her studies during the tragic events of 1994 in Rwanda. In January 2010, she decided to return to Rwanda and announced her candidacy in that year's presidential election. She was arrested for criticizing the Rwandan



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government's reconciliation policy and sentenced to fifteen years in prison following a trial widely denounced for its political motivations.

In a historic ruling in 2017, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) found that Rwanda had violated her right to freedom of expression and to adequate defense. To this day, Rwanda refuses to comply with this decision. Ms. Ingabire spent eight years in prison, five of them in solitary confinement, before being released under a presidential pardon in 2018.

Her release was subject to two conditions, due to expire in October 2025. One required her to obtain authorization from the Minister of Justice to leave the country. Despite requests submitted to the Minister and the President of Rwanda to travel to the Netherlands to reunite with her family (including her ill husband), she received no response.

Since her release in 2018, Ms. Ingabire has remained committed to peaceful political reform and good governance in Rwanda through inclusive national dialogue. In 2024, the Rwandan judicial system prevented her from running in the July presidential elections. She subsequently filed a case before the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) to restore her civic rights.

On June 19, 2025, just months before the expiration of her pardon, Ms. Ingabire was arrested again. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression stated that the charges against her appeared to be direct retaliation for her political activities and exercise of free expression.

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