

Brussels, May 9, 2016.

**Open Letter to women members of the Rwandan Parliament, following the assassination of Mrs. Theodosia Uwamahoro by Security agents**

**Honourable Member of Parliament (All)**

**Honourable Senator (All)**

It is with great sadness that we learnt about the death of Ms. Theodosia Uwamahoro, at the hands of the Rwandan security agents at the Nyabugogo taxi park in Kigali on May 7, 2016. What makes the state sponsored crime more gruesome is the fact that the victim had done nothing more than just trying to survive on doing petty trade on Kigali streets. It is even more sickening are the statements made by administrative officials including the Mayor when contacted to comment on this heinous murder. They are alleged to have commented that the victim, Ms. Theodosia Uwamahoro was "dirt" that had to be cleaned from the city.

**Honourable Member of Parliament, Honourable Senator,**

As parliamentarians, it is your duty to exercise your parliamentary oversight on executive arm of government and to ensure that those who commit abuses against the population are made accountable and punished according to the law. Moreover, as a female member of a Parliament in which women constitute a majority, you should be at the forefront in denouncing and condemning extrajudicial executions against women and in particular when a woman is targeted and killed for the "sole crime of being poor."

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This sad incident brings back to mind and corroborates the Human Rights Watch report<sup>1</sup> of September 23, 2015 which highlights the fact that Rwandan authorities prefer a clean city to the care of its poor people, as if people just survive on clean streets. How can the Rwandan people be said to own this "African Singapore", as Rwanda is dubbed by admirers of the regime, when the price to pay is offering them as sacrificial lamb on the altar of development?

You should be quite aware that this woman is the pillar of the family. What action do you propose to take against the authorities who despise women to the point of treating this lady Ms. Theodosia Uwamahoro, who keeps the family alive as a street vendor, as dirt simply because poor and destitute? What do you intend to do to help orphans left by the deceased (if she had children since; according to the report from Voice of America, her baby was killed earlier on)?

In this regard the International Women's Network for Democracy and Peace (IwnDP) appeals to you as women members of Parliament and Senate to:

1. openly and strongly condemn the murder of Ms. Theodosia Uwamahoro;
2. demand that the murderers be punished in an exemplary manner;
3. call on the ministers responsible for security to clarify the instructions given to security agents including those in Kigali;
4. officially call on the Mayor of Kigali to explain the derogatory and degrading statements made about Mrs. Theodosia Uwamahoro;
5. exercise your prerogatives as parliamentarians overseeing government action, and end a situation where security agents seem to have been given a "license to kill" with impunity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/24/why-not-call-place-prison/unlawful-detention-and-ill-treatment-rwandas-gikondo>

Please accept Honourable Member of Parliament, Honourable Senator, the assurance of our highest consideration.

For the IwnDP:

Perpétue Muramutse (Canadian desk)

Gloria Uwishema (Netherlands desk)

Daphrose Nyirankundwankize (Belgian desk )

E-mai : [international@rifdp-iwndp.org](mailto:international@rifdp-iwndp.org)

cc :

African Union

European Union