



PARTY FOR DEMOCRACY IN RWANDA (PDR)-IHUMURE

Peace, Justice and Development



COMMONWEALTH TELLS MSWATI: “CHANGE OR SINK”. KAGAME SHOULD BE TOLD THE SAME.

King Mswati III has been ruling Swaziland for 29 years at his own discretion and has resisted all efforts to democratise the country. In that tiny country in Southern Africa, political parties have been banned, while civil society organisations' activities are prohibited. To completely thrash the organisations that advocate the multi-party democracy, this absolute monarch went even further on to pass the “Suppression of Terrorism Act”, under which the leaders and activities of these organisations are prosecuted. The media has been obligated to stay away from political developments and this further signals the oppression Swazi people have been subjected to.

While Mswati's governance has been under severe pressure from within the country, this effort of the proponents of democracy has been blessed by an unyielding intervention of Commonwealth (Body assembling all countries formerly colonised by Britain) whereby a special envoy, former Malawian President -Bakili Muluzi- was mandated to set negotiations in motion between the regime and all opposition organisations. The unequivocal message of the Commonwealth was reproduced in African Independent newspaper as follows: “The Commonwealth is applying pressure on Swaziland to democratise and lift the ban on political parties. It also wants the constitution reviewed ahead of the next elections in 2018”.

The Commonwealth objectives include, among others, the promotion of representative democracy and individual liberty, and these objectives were put in place since 1971, while the promotion of democracy and development was made its highest priority since

2003. Rwanda joined this group towards the end of 2009, and notwithstanding the above-mentioned objectives, Rwanda has been shining just by acting against them.

It is very possible to comment on the non-democratic nature of governance of both Swaziland and Rwanda, but any attempt to weigh the human rights abuses between both countries, would not only be fallacious and mockery, but truly cynical to the people of Rwanda. Reports from various leading non-profit organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have been voicing their concerns about the human rights abuse in Rwanda.

It is in Rwanda, where a number of opposition political leaders have and are being jailed for having different opinions from those of the ruling party, while the same fate continues to apply to journalists and civil society leaders. The lucky ones have managed to flee the country. The worse scenario in Rwanda, however, which is not the case in Swaziland, is the killing of people of all categories. Politicians, military officers, religious leaders, journalists, educationalists, as well as ordinary people have been killed just because of expressing their views about their country.

Succession in power, is a prohibited word. As a King, Mswati is set to rule forever - unless the country shifts from being a Monarchy to Republic as some voices from within Swaziland advocate,- Kagame has also recently appointed a commission to revise the constitution, for him to rule for ever, even if Rwanda is a Republic. Ironically, Kagame has always emphasised that it is the prerogative of the people of Rwanda to decide on their way of governance, and it is the same people that he has denied a say.

Democracy means the voice of the people. In case the people cannot exercise this right, like it is the case in Rwanda, the ruler makes all the decisions in his/her favour and attribute them to the people. Some African leaders including President Kagame advocate the slogan of "African solutions to African problems". What is very critical is that some African intergovernmental organisations such as the African Union (AU) do not contribute to the solving of many problems that the continent is faced with, mainly the issue of dictatorship, until external forces decide to do so. While commonwealth is pressurising Swaziland to democratise, the AU - without even a vocal support- is preparing to have its 2020 summit in Mbabane (capital of Swaziland). This Commonwealth action is worthy of support, but it should also not be selective. All

oppressive and dictatorial regimes, especially those who kill their citizens such as in Rwanda should be pressurised to change, regardless of whether they are economically evolved or not. It is important to note that economic development can only be sustainable once a country is coherent and democratic, which ensures the sharing of the benefits of that growth. We therefore call on Commonwealth to extend its message of change to President Kagame in order for his dictatorship and bloodshed to stop.

For the PDR-IHUMURE,

JB Ngarambe, 1st Vice-President and spokesperson