

INTRODUCTION OF PAUL RUSESABAGINA

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Brussels, Belgium – 15 December 2012

I am honored to be here today to speak about two things: The Rwanda that has been, and is now, in the murderous grip of Paul Kagame, and the Rwanda that can be if moral and civic leaders work together to form a genuine democracy with people like Paul Rusesabagina, a man who saves lives rather than destroys them.

The Paul whom I first met was Paul Kagame. I arrived as U.S. Ambassador to Burundi in late June 1994, when neighboring Rwanda had killed almost 800,000 people in 90 days' time - roughly one of every eight Rwandan citizens.

Fortunately, the genocidaires that had begun the slaughter in April, 1994 were defeated. But unfortunately, the revenging forces under Paul Kagame, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, began a new genocide, which the outside world has not wanted to acknowledge. In 1994, 1000 Rwandans each day were fleeing their homeland to enter Burundi and live in UN refugee camps there. I visited those camps every week. When I asked the Rwandan refugees when they would return home, they replied "When Kagame and the RPF stop killing us."

The first 1994 genocide was known throughout the world. The second, revenging genocide that began under Kagame, was and is still largely ignored – because the

outside world does not want to acknowledge that those who had won in July 1994 were no better than those who had lost. To acknowledge it would mean that the UN and the outside world needed to do something about it. And instead, the world has preferred to pretend that the problem does not exist.

In August 1994 I met personally with Paul Kagame, the leader of the winning forces. I told him to his face what Rwandan refugees who had fled to Burundi were telling me: that is, that they would not return to Rwanda until Kagame's RPF stopped killing them. He refused to take any responsibility for that second, vengeful genocide. And the outside world continues to pretend that the genocide in Rwanda has ended. It has not. In fact, it has spread to the Democratic Republic of Congo through M23 and other militia groups that Kagame sponsors. And Kagame's dictatorship that began in 1994 has continued for 18 years until this day.

The Kagame government not only takes lives. It also steals elections.

Rwandan elections under Kagame's dictatorship are fraudulent. Political opponents are sometimes imprisoned, sometimes exiled, sometimes silenced, sometimes killed. And terror among the population continues.

Some Western nations have, over time, observed the despotism and removed their financial aid from Rwanda. Others have begun withdrawing some military and cultural support. But the tyranny continues, with journalists imprisoned, political opponents

sometimes disappearing, and the cold pall of terror permeating the entire populace. Kagame and his party continue regularly to claim 90% of the vote from a frightened voting population. But no president in a country with honest elections and a free press ever gets above 90%. These are not honest elections. There is neither freedom nor justice in Rwanda today.

So let's consider what Rwanda could be with civic and moral leadership from men and women who would rather save lives than destroy lives.

Without firing a shot, without raising a weapon, Paul Rusesabagina, as the world knows, saved 1,268 lives amidst a maelstrom of carnage and killing. How? With resourcefulness, patience, and abiding faith, he protected a small but significant island of people in an ocean of slaughter. For his bravery and resourcefulness, his calm amidst the storm, he has received many honors worldwide – including the highest honor that can be given by my country, the United States of America, to any civilian of any country. It is called, simply, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Paul Rusesabagina received it. Paul Kagame did not.

Paul Rusesabagina preserved freedom, and life, for 1,268 people. He has sought since that time to enlarge freedom for the entire people of his beloved nation. He has sought, as well, to recapture from the world some respect for a nation that continues to be steeped in blood. He will be working with the Party for Democracy in Rwanda (PDR) to challenge the existing tyranny. Today he will call upon the PDR and other like-minded

political parties and civic groups to establish a genuine democracy. The decision to announce this alliance on foreign soil is an act not of cowardice, but of prudence. He has to announce in a country that allows free speech, not one that imprisons journalists and those who challenge tyranny.

It is not unusual, on Planet Earth, to find groups of people who have fled murderous tyranny in their homeland, in order, while in exile, to plant the roots for a new government at home.

Rwanda has given the world Paul Rusesabagina – a man who has risked – and by his outspokenness, continues to risk his life – in order to achieve a better life for all Rwandans. The story of his heroism was so remarkable that it continues to be taught and discussed, and believed and wondered at to this day. Hotel Rwanda, the movie that tells that story, is known everywhere, and Paul Rusesabagina is deservedly admired on every continent.

Paul Rusesabagina is not seeking to become famous. He already is.

Paul Rusesabagina is not seeking to become wealthy. He already lives well.

He is not seeking revenge. He loves his country and his countrymen.

He is seeking to serve – to serve all the people of his homeland.

After a lull in the fighting during the initial genocide in July of 1994, Paul returned to the home of his wife's mother in Rwanda. There, in a deep hole in the ground used to ferment Banana Beer, he found the decaying bodies of his wife's mother, her sisters, children, and family. He walked up the hillside, sat by himself, and quietly wept.

But following his tears, he made a vow to do whatever he could to save his country from ever undergoing an experience like that again. Paul is ready now to live up to that vow and to serve his country. He seeks, with all Rwandans, to establish a genuine democracy, true freedom, and the promise of better life for all Rwandans. A new country that saves lives, rather than destroys them. I hope you will all join together and work to achieve these sacred goals.

Ladies and gentlemen – I give you a true and noble Rwandan – your own Paul Rusesabagina.