

# International Development Committee

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From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Foreign Secretary  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
*By email*

22 April 2021

## Rwanda – governance and UK aid

Dear Dominic

I am writing in advance of the CHOGM which is due to take place in Rwanda in June. My attention has been drawn to evidence that, although Rwanda has made some progress in recent years in terms of economic development, there are still serious questions over standards of governance.

This evidence is contained in a paper (attached) which I have received from Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, President of Dalfa Umurinzi, (Development and Liberty for All), a recently-established political party. In her paper, Ms Ingabire provides a disturbing and credible account of her past mistreatment by the Rwandan authorities, and of their continuing failure to respect democratic values.

I know that UK Ministers are aware of Ms Ingabire's case and have previously urged the Rwandan government to respect Commonwealth principles of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. I hope that you will find time to underline again to the Rwandan authorities that their behaviour in relation to opposition politicians has at times been at odds with the principles of the Commonwealth.

Apart from raising human and civil rights issues, the paper also argues that these problems of governance are impeding the progress of Rwanda's development:

*the Rwandan government is yet to implement a good governance capable to bring about solid economic transformation and sustainable development in Rwanda. An example of this is the government's development programme, launched in 2000, that promised to transform Rwanda by 2020 into a middle-income state driven by a knowledge economy. Despite receiving abundant technical and financial support from developed countries - including the United Kingdom - and intergovernmental partners, the government of Rwanda has not delivered its promise. Instead it has prolonged its delivery to 2035.*

Ms Ingabire's paper continues:

*We attribute our government's failure in achieving anticipated results in the aforementioned economic areas to lack of good governance in Rwanda. A governance that limits political space, lacks separation of power and impedes freedom of expression and represses any critics to government's development policies cannot indeed lead to sustainable development.*

These failures of governance appear to mean, among other things, that the impact of the substantial UK aid effort in Rwanda has been diminished. According to Ms Ingabire:

*While some improvements can be noted in the areas the British money has been spent in Rwanda, the vision to transform Rwanda from low to middle income by 2020 has not been delivered. Overall human capital remains undeveloped, poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity levels continues to be high in Rwanda.*

To remedy this problem, Ms Ingabire makes a constructive suggestion, which I think would repay your attention. She says:

*My proposal to development partners of Rwanda is to reorient their funds into a bigger project that aims to bring the government and the dissent voices in the country around a table to discuss and establish a new political environment framework that guarantees a good governance in Rwanda capable to safeguard what has been achieved and build on them to reach sustainable development.*

I accept that you would not wish to intervene in the political process in Rwanda. However, it has been noticeable, during our current inquiry on the Philosophy of Aid, that many witnesses have complained that non-governmental voices from recipient countries are not heard enough when UK aid is being planned.

I believe therefore that there would be value in allowing the widest possible range of views to be taken into account in shaping the UK aid programme for Rwanda. I hope that you will respond positively to this suggestion from Ms Ingabire, and more generally that you will ensure that in future the needs of Rwanda are assessed on the basis of the widest possible consultation with civil society and other organisations before country allocations are made. An approach of this sort could go far to maximise the impact of UK development assistance in Rwanda.

I look forward to your response.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S', on a light blue background.

**Sarah Champion MP**

**Chair of the Committee**

