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PRESS RELEASE

Rwanda: Pre-Election Violence and Intimidation Must Stop

ARTICLE 19 calls upon the Government of President Kagame to investigate all incidents of violence against activists, journalists and human rights defenders, in the lead up to Rwanda's August elections, and ensure they are able to carry out their legitimate activities in safety.

Following the killing of Leonard Rugambage, deputy editor of "Umuwugizi" newspaper, on 24 June 2010, ARTICLE 19 is greatly concerned by increasing threats to activists and media workers in Rwanda, particularly those perceived to be critical of the Government. On the morning he was killed Rugambage published an online article alleging that the Rwandan Government was behind the attempted murder of one of their most outspoken critics, former General Faustin Kayumba, who is now lying critically injured inside a South African hospital. Shortly after 10 pm Rugambage was shot dead in his car.

"We condemn the killing of the late Leonard Rugambage and call upon the Government to ensure that those who committed this heinous act face justice. At the same time we wish to remind the authorities of their primary responsibility to provide security for the people of Rwanda" says Dr. Agnes Callamard, Executive Director, ARTICLE 19.

"The loss of life, under whatever circumstances, is deplorable and particularly troubling during what should be a democratic election. The continued intimidation of dissenting voices in Rwanda shows the extent of the current regime's intolerance and prevents political commentary, directly limiting the ability of opposition parties to participate" adds Dr. Callamard.

ARTICLE 19 calls on Rwanda's Government to bring those responsible for Rugambage's death to justice without delay. In addition ARTICLE 19 appeals to the authorities to ensure that opposition voices are not excluded from Rwanda's political process, compromising freedom of expression during a pivotal period in the country's development.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free