



Petition for the Protection of Rwandan Refugees

We, the undersigned, oppose invocation of the “cessation clause” of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with respect to Rwanda. Thousands of persons fled Rwanda and are currently seeking protection abroad. These are not people escaping retribution from the 1994 genocide; they are those who have been fleeing Rwanda since that event because of the instability, ethnic strife, arbitrary judicial procedures, indiscriminate retaliation, political violence, intolerance of dissent, impunity, and lack of accountability that has followed.

Cessation is a drastic measure that would strip refugees of their legal rights and expose them to forcible repatriation and the risk of further persecution. The Cessation Clause should only be invoked with extreme caution when there has been, according to Guidelines of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 1) a *fundamental and profound* change in country conditions such that they no longer have a well-founded fear of persecution, 2) the change is demonstrably *enduring* and not merely transitory, and 3) the change enables refugees to enjoy the *protection* of the government.

Rwanda has made much progress since the genocide but it has not done so through reliable democratic and peaceful means. It remains a fragile, volatile, authoritarian regime with little tolerance for dissent, freedom of speech, or independent human rights reporting. Social and political fissures remain unresolved and the Rwandan government maintains an overtly hostile attitude toward its citizens who have fled. Positive changes need time to consolidate and genuine national reconciliation remains untested. Moreover, since 2009 more Rwandans have been fleeing, not just Hutu, but large numbers of *genocide survivors* who were never refugees before, as well as officials of the Rwandan government and officers from its army. Now is not the time to revoke protection from Rwandan refugees!

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Women Poverty Eradication Centre, Cameroon

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LGBT Asylum News, United Kingdom

Long Journey Home, United Kingdom

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