



ISHEMA Party Statement on Sanctions Against the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF)

The ISHEMA Party welcomes the decision by the United States administration to impose sanctions on the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) as an entity, along with several of its senior commanders, for their involvement in war crimes and human rights violations in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

This action represents an important and principled step toward accountability in the Great Lakes region. The sanctions align with similar measures adopted by the European Union and reflect a growing recognition within the international community that persistent violations of international humanitarian law and cross-border military aggression must carry consequences.

While these measures are commendable, their effectiveness will ultimately depend on whether accountability extends throughout the full chain of command. The Rwanda Defence Force operates under the direct authority of its Commander-in-Chief, the President of Rwanda, General Paul Kagame. Under the well-established doctrine of command responsibility in international law, those who exercise ultimate authority over military forces bear responsibility for actions carried out under their command. For sanctions to achieve their intended impact, no individual should be shielded from scrutiny or accountability by virtue of political office, status, or privilege.

The ISHEMA Party also respectfully urges U.S. policymakers and Members of Congress to consider expanding the sanctions framework to include former RDF officers currently serving in Rwanda's diplomatic missions abroad, particularly those appointed as military attachés or serving in strategic diplomatic roles. Many of these individuals remain closely connected to the RDF and continue to advance its institutional interests while operating under diplomatic cover. Their assignments abroad often serve, in part, to promote and defend the international image of the RDF despite documented allegations of serious violations. These individuals should therefore be carefully reviewed within the sanctions framework and, where appropriate, considered for additional measures, including recall from their postings.

Another issue requiring urgent policy consideration is the participation of the RDF in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The deployment of a military institution facing credible allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and involvement in incidents affecting UN peacekeepers raises



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serious concerns regarding the credibility and integrity of international peacekeeping missions. The ISHEMA Party therefore calls upon the United States government, Congress, and relevant international partners to review Rwanda's participation in UN peacekeeping operations and to advocate for the suspension of RDF deployments until credible accountability mechanisms and institutional reforms are established.

Beyond immediate security concerns, the underlying driver of Rwanda's external military interventions is the absence of democratic governance and institutional checks on executive power. In a democratic system grounded in the separation of powers, legislative oversight, and an independent judiciary, no president would be able to deploy the national army in foreign conflicts without scrutiny and constraint. Durable regional stability therefore requires meaningful political reform within Rwanda itself.

For this reason, the ISHEMA Party respectfully encourages the United States government and Congress to support and facilitate an inclusive Inter-Rwandan Dialogue aimed at enabling a peaceful political transition. Such a process should help prepare the conditions for President Paul Kagame's orderly departure from power and the establishment of a transitional government tasked with organizing free and fair democratic elections within an open political space.

The ISHEMA Party stands ready to contribute constructively to such a process and to work with international partners, including the United States, in advancing a peaceful, democratic, and stable future for Rwanda and the broader Great Lakes region.

About ISHEMA Party

The ISHEMA Party is a Rwandan political organization committed to promoting democratic governance, the rule of law, human rights, and a peaceful political transition in Rwanda.

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*ISHEMA Party seeks to promote Democracy in Rwanda through values of **TRUTH, INTREPIDNESS, and SOCIAL JUSTICE***

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