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## Developments in Rwanda

*U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04)*

*Excerpts of Remarks*

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*Subcommittee on Africa, Health, Global Human Rights,  
and International Organizations Hearing on Rwanda*

In 1994, the East African nation of Rwanda experienced one of the most horrific genocides in modern times. An estimated 800,000 Rwandans – mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderates among the ethnic Hutus were brutally murdered in a state-backed extermination campaign that lasted for months.

Hutu-Tutsi tensions date back to colonial times, when the Belgians created a superior class composed of Tutsis, shutting out Hutus from government jobs and higher education despite Hutus comprising about 85% of the population. In 1959 and 1960, tensions among the Hutus exploded in a campaign that left 20,000 Tutsis dead and created 300,000 Tutsi refugees.

As with this earlier genocide, the international community watched largely from the sidelines during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as the death toll rose from April until July of that year until the Rwandan Patriotic Front or RPF defeated the Hutu-led government military. More than two million mostly-Hutu refugees flooded into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, leading to continuing problems in that country. The RPF-led Rwandan government has criticized the United Nations for sheltering Hutu participants in the genocide and for allowing them to arm in refugee camps.

Over the years, the RPF has used the guilt of the international community as a shield to prevent criticism of its action. UN Ambassador Samantha Power referred to Ambassador Susan Rice and her colleagues in the Clinton Administration in the 1990s as Bystanders to Genocide. She quotes Rice in the 2002 book as saying, "If we use the word 'genocide' and are seen as doing nothing, what will be the effect on the November congressional election?" Part of Rice's team during those years was Gayle Smith, current nominee to head the U.S. Agency for International Development.

As far back as May 1998, I chaired a hearing that included testimony about the willful U.S. neglect in preventing the Rwandan genocide. As recounted in an issue of the New Yorker magazine at

the time, a high-ranking Rwandan informant had warned the U.N. leadership, including Kofi Annan, and the United States about preparations for killings 3 months before they began. The recipients apparently did not act on that information

Furthermore, the United States has been accused not merely of inaction, but also of obstructing preemptive multilateral efforts to quell the crisis. Some have alleged that, in the words of Refugees International president Lionel Rosenblatt, “The ball was not only dropped by the United States, it was blocked by the United States.”

Paul Kagame, now President of Rwanda, was hailed as one of “Africa’s new leaders” by Rice and her team during the 1990s, and there has been no apparent change in their high opinion of him since then despite what Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert Jackson describes as several public Administration statements related to human rights concerns and ongoing dialogue with the /Rwandan government.

Kagame has been considered a hero on the international stage, and has long been immune to public criticism. However, human rights reports about abuses in Rwanda have grown over the years. The most recent State Department human rights report about Rwanda accuses the government of “targeting of political opponents and human rights advocates for harassment, arrest and abuse.” Many observers note the constraints on freedom of expression that criminalizes public criticism of the RPF and its policies, as well as outlawing public discussion of ethnic issues. In that vein, the RPF has used charges of “genocide ideology” and “divisionism” as well as national security concerns, to justify prosecution of opposition political figures and journalists and prevent human rights organizations from reporting on events in their country.

In recent years, there are credible reports that the RPF government has commissioned assassins to kill dissidents living in exile who criticize the government or attempt to form political associations or parties.

Several years ago, our committee Chairman Ed Royce was told by Paul Russessabagina of Hotel Rwanda fame that the Rwandan government had targeted him and was behind several attempts on his life in Belgium.

In early 2014, former Rwandan intelligence chief Faustin Kayumba, who had been living in exile in South Africa, was found murdered in his hotel room in Johannesburg.

Kayumba was one of two dissidents one of our witnesses today—former Rwandan Maj. Robert Higer—says he was asked to have killed. The assassination plot he revealed was investigated and substantiated in a series of articles in Canada’s Globe and Mail newspaper, which interviewed Rwandan exiles in South Africa and Belgium.

Since 2012, this subcommittee has held a series of hearings on the violence perpetrated by various militia in eastern DRC. Perhaps the best known of them, the so-called M23, was supported by Rwanda. This Congress has enacted restrictions on some military assistance to Rwanda in response to its involvement in militia activity in the DRC and involvement in resource smuggling from that country, as uncovered in several United Nations reports.

These charges of serious human rights and other abuses would be troubling in any case, but Rwanda is a country that has enjoyed significant U.S. and international support. By largely avoiding criticism of Rwandan human rights issues, the Bush and Obama Administrations raised appropriations to Rwanda from \$39 million in FY2003 to \$188 million in FY2014. This largely has involved funding of

health, food security and other socioeconomic projects, as well as support for Rwandan participation in international peacekeeping.

Rwanda is the sixth largest troop and police contributing country in the UN, with more than 4,000 troops, more than 400 police, and 13 military observers in seven UN missions, including: the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID); the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH); the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); the UN Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA); the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and the UN Integrated Peace-building Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS).

Rwanda, due to donor aid, political stability and favorable investor policies, has grown by an average of 8 percent annually over the past decade. It is considered one of the recipient countries most able to achieve results from aid programs. Yet donors began reducing or redirecting funds in 2012 because of Rwanda's role in supporting M23. The growing reports of human rights abuses also are leading to greater caution among donor nations about directly supporting the Rwandan government.

Our hearing today is intended to examine these continuing reports of gross human rights violations and determine how they impact U.S. policy currently and in the years ahead.