

The recent article in the National Interest entitled “Hotel Rwanda’s Rusesabagina Deserves Prison” is very interesting. Why would an American conservative/neo-conservative international affairs magazine support a dictator in Rwanda over a humanitarian who was kidnapped by that regime? Typically American values speak to human rights and democracy, two things that Paul Kagame’s Rwanda does not embrace.

In this case, the story seems to be more about the author’s article, Michael Rubin, his connections to conservative activist and close Kagame advisor Mauro De Lorenzo. Both were associated with the American Enterprise Institute and worked on projects together. Rubin is not an expert on Rwanda, but is rather known for his work on Arab politics, Iran, Iraq and the Middle East. De Lorenzo, on the other hand, not only writes about Rwanda, but starting in 2012 became a top American advisor to Paul Kagame. Kagame regularly employs Americans to spread his version of the truth in Washington, and to make sure his relationship to the US stays strong. In particular, this includes making sure that critics of the Rwandan government don’t ask the wrong questions. And the recent article by Rubin is straight out of Kagame’s playbook when attacking critics, including using partial truths, twisted rationales and simply false allegations in an attempt to “prove” that humanitarian Paul Rusesabagina is actually the criminal, and long-time human rights abuser Paul Kagame is the hero.

What does this story look like? Rubin begins by complaining that Rusesabagina’s Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation (HRRF) was founded to support widows and orphans of the genocide, but now engages in criticism of Kagame. He states this as proof of some unclear ulterior motive. Ironically this claim is mostly true, but fails to show the full story. The HRRF was set up to support Rwandan orphans and widows. After a few years the mission was changed to focus on building an international truth and reconciliation process for Rwanda, the Great Lakes region and Rwandans in the Diaspora when the recipients of funds from Rusesabagina in Rwanda were repeatedly targeted by Paul Kagame’s government for retribution. The final straw came when a partner organization doing the on the ground work in Rwanda was kicked out of the country overnight because of the association with Rusesabagina and 300 families were left without services.

The article goes on to claim that Rusesabagina traveled to Barcelona, Spain in 2006 to meet with the FDLR about funding terrorism. The problem is that Rusesabagina has no contact with the FDLR, and has decried them since the genocide in 1994. He was in Barcelona at that time, but it was for an internationally convened Intra Rwandan truth and reconciliation dialogue, not to meet with the FDLR as falsely stated by Mr. Rubin. Claims that critics of the Rwandan government work with the FDLR are common for the Kagame government in an attempt to demonize critics, and similar claims were made against jailed presidential candidate Victoire Ingabire in 2010 (among others). <https://doczz.fr/doc/4494643/intra-rwandan-dialogue-imishyikirano>

The FDLR has also made it clear that they hate Paul Rusesabagina, and they have regularly sent him hate messages over the years. They have been angry at Rusesabagina since 2005 because they feel like they were portrayed badly in the film Hotel Rwanda. He protected Tutsis, and the FDLR calls him a Tutsi because he saved Tutsi lives. The movie showed that Kagame won the war and the FDLR despised Paul for that. The only connections between Paul and the FDLR have been those fabricated by the Kagame regime.























