

Executive Summary: Paul Rusesabagina provides more details on his kidnapping and torture in Rwanda

Paul Rusesabagina was kidnapped on 27 August 2020 and has now been held in solitary confinement in Rwanda for nearly 250 days. He has only recently been able to provide further information about the circumstances of his arrest and his detention between 27 and 31 August 2020. This information confirms that in addition to kidnapping and arbitrary detention, Paul has been subjected to torture during his incarceration.

This information confirms that Mr. Rusesabagina was taken to Rwanda against his will, believing that he was on a flight to Burundi. He was lured onto the plane by Constantin Niyomwungere (aka “the Bishop”) who told him they were going to Burundi. This information was confirmed by the Gainjet pilot (Alexandre) and flight attendant (Alice), when Paul chatted with them on the plane and asked their destination. On the flight, Paul confirmed that he was drugged by the Bishop. He never sleeps on planes but fell asleep immediately after food was served.

Upon landing, Mr. Rusesabagina realised that he was in Rwanda when he recognised the Kigali control tower. The Bishop continued the farce by asking Paul to stay on the plane while he exited to meet with their Burundian host, but then returned with four Rwandan Investigation Bureau (RIB) agents. Paul started screaming and tried to exit the plane, thinking he was going to be killed or otherwise harmed. Mr. Rusesabagina was then restrained by four RIB agents who entered the plane. They tied his hands, legs and face, and then dragged him across the tarmac and threw him into a car. This was done in plain site of the flight crew, and the Captain wished Paul “good luck” as he was dragged off the plane.

Mr. Rusesabagina was taken to a location which he describes as a “slaughterhouse.” He was detained here from 27-31 August 2020. At all times he remained bound hand and foot, blindfolded, in the dark, unable to see, and was deprived of food and sleep. At times his nose and mouth were also covered. When his legs would shake because of lack of oxygen, the gag on his mouth would be loosened.

He described a member of the RIB, Michel Mbanzabagabo, stepping on his neck with military boots, sometimes also while he was gagged. This agent stated that “we know how to torture you.” Paul had to be helped to stand. He was carried to the bathroom and held to defecate. He described hearing other detainees including women screaming and calling out for help, until the screaming stopped like a light being turned off.

Mr. Rusesabagina’s blindfold was removed once during period of 28 to 31 August 2020, when he met with two men who identified themselves as the Rwandan Prosecutor General, Mr Aimable Havugiyaremye and the Secretary General of the RIB, Mr. Janot Rubunga. These two men told Mr. Rusesabagina that he needed to sign a document stating that the President of Zambia provided funds for the FLN, and if he did, he would be released. Mr. Rusesabagina did not agree.

He was not interrogated until 31 August, just tortured, other than the one visit by the Prosecutor General and RIB chief. He was then transported to the Remera Police station where he was held until 17 September. In this 22-day period, Mr. Rusesabagina lost 9 kilos, and continued to be deprived of food and sleep.

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