

Brief Legal Overview of the Kidnapping and Trial of Paul Rusesabagina

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The fact that Paul's rights as a detainee and as a human have been violated over the past year, is beyond dispute. The Rwandan authorities have never denied that he was tortured. Nor are they denying the ongoing searching of his lawyers, who cannot even pass him a document. The co-accused in Paul's trial have now stood in the courtroom and declared to the world that their conditions of detention are unbearable; sleeping on concrete floors, without enough food. More alarming, some told the Judges that they had only accused Paul after being coerced into doing so. Independent international monitors, following the trial, have already concluded that Paul's rights have been violated to the extent that any verdict must be called into question.

These facts are all known, and beyond question. What was still **unknown** as the trial opened in February this year, was what the Rwandan prosecution authorities had in their pocket, that made them so confident they could bring terrorism charges against Paul. Journalists, members of civil society, and the public, continued to question what it was Paul must have done, to end up as an accused before a Rwandan court?

As the trial drew to a close on 22 July, the answer to this question also became clear. **Nothing**. The prosecution produced **no credible evidence whatsoever** of any link between Paul Rusesabagina and attacks on civilians. The prosecution presented only two witnesses, one of whom had been a paid agent of the Rwandan government reporting directly to the President's chief of staff; the second was a former accused, who had struck a deal with the prosecution. Neither witness, by their own admission, had any direct knowledge of the events which are the subject of the charges. Both left the courtroom having failed to provide any link between Paul and the crimes of which he is accused. The trial is available online. The lack of evidence can no longer be hidden.

What this means, concretely, is that Paul has now been held in arbitrary detention for 365 days. He should never have been kidnapped, should never have been tortured, should never have been detained, and must now be released. There are no more questions left to ask. There is no reason left for the international community to wait and see. Paul's state of health means that this is now a literal question of life and death. The time to act is now.