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Thursday, June 3th, 2021 | Year 3, Number 58 | Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga | English

Théogène Turatsinze (2012) and Ntamuhanga Cassien (2021): the most high-profile victims of Paul Kagame's regime in Mozambique



- While being hailed as a Statesman who is developing and modernizing Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, Paul Kagame has become sadly notorious for being an accomplished exterminator of opponents of his regime, including critics and former allies in exile in various African countries.



Ntamuhanga Cassien



Théogène Turatsinze

- In addition to journalist Ntamuhanga Cassien, the Kigali regime has targeted several Rwandans in exile in Mozambique, most notably Théogène Turatsinze, who was found dead in Maputo City in 2012. Turatsinze was a key player in the investigation of a billionaire looting in the Rwanda Development Bank, which for years served as a “blue bag” for the Patriotic Front of Rwanda, Paul Kagame’s party.

It has been 11 days today since the forced disappearance of the Rwandan journalist, Ntamuhanga Cassien, which occurred on May 23, 2021, at 4 pm, in Inhaca Island, Maputo City. According to a note issued by the Association of Rwandan Refugees in Mozambique (ARRM), the journalist Cassien was kidnapped by eight (8) individuals posing as PRM agents, including a Rwandan who spoke in the victim’s local language. In Mozambique, where he had been residing for about four (4) years, 37-year-old Ntamuhanga Cassien was doing business on

Inhaca Island and it was at his shop that they kidnapped him. When the group arrived at the place, they pretended to be shopping, but Cassien became suspicious and alerted the ARRM. Still, the eight individuals ended up kidnapping the Rwandan journalist and taking him to an undisclosed location. The ARRM says it has made inquiries to obtain more information about the motives for the kidnapping and the whereabouts of the victim, but has been unsuccessful. Therefore, the association fears that Cassien will suffer the same fate as former journalists and social

activists, including his family, who were killed by the government. According to ARRM, some journalists linked to the Kagame regime announced on social networks on May 24 that the Rwandan government was waiting for Cassien's extradition, which increases fears that the kidnapping was ordered from Kigali. Contacted by Lusa last week, the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC) said it had no record of any operation to arrest Rwandan citizens in Mozambique and no report of the disappearance or abduction of a foreigner. Ntamuhanga Cassien was Director of the Rwandan Radio and Television Amazing Grace and is described by ARRM as a journalist who has always taken a stand against the policies of the Rwandan government consisting of persecuting and executing citizens who hold views contrary to Paul Kagame's regime. Due to his critical stance towards the Government in Kigali, Ntamuhanga Cassien was targeted, and in 2015 he was eventually arrested and sentenced to 25 years in prison on charges of

conspiracy against the Government or the incumbent President, complicity in a terrorist act, and conspiracy to murder. In 2017, Cassien managed to escape from prison and applied for asylum in Mozambique, in light of Law 21/91 of December 31 - which establishes the process for granting refugee status, the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees, and the 1969 Convention of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union). In May of last year, Cassien was tried in absentia and sentenced to 25 years in prison in a case in which he and 12 other men were charged with terrorism. In its note, ARRM expresses concern over the extrajudicial arrests of Rwandans in Mozambique and reminds the Mozambican state about its responsibilities to protect refugees in light of international agreements. "The refugee has the right to be protected by the host state, and his rights should not be put at stake because of political interests, given that this is not the first time that abductions have occurred in this country."

Théogène Turatsinze: o antigo banqueiro de Kigali silenciado em Maputo em 2012

In fact, journalist Ntamuhanga Cassien is yet another victim of so many others who have been silenced by the Kigali regime in Mozambique. In October 2012, Théogène Turatsinze, former Director of the Development Bank of Rwanda, was found dead in Maputo City under still unclear circumstances. His body was found floating in the bay of the capital, with his hands tied behind his back, after he had been reported missing for two days. Théogène Turatsinze was the bearer of crucial information about a financial looting that took place at the Rwandan development bank at the time he was director, between 2005 and 2007. The money taken from the state bank was intended for the business of the Patriotic Front of Rwanda, the ruling party led by Paul Kagame. As mediaFAX wrote on October 18, 2012, Turatsinze went on a collision course with the Kagame regime after



he disobeyed an order from the Finance Minister to declare the state bankrupt in 2007. His refusal cost him his resignation, a situation that led him to leave Rwanda to take up residence in Maputo, where he devoted himself to academia and business. When he was assassinated, Théogène Turatsinze was vice-rector of the University of St. Thomas in Mozambique (USTM). His successor, Jack Kayonga, complied with the order of the Minister of Finance and, in addition to declaring the Development Bank of Rwanda bankrupt, cancelled all debts of the members of the Rwanda Patriotic Front. Turatsinze's assassination occurred just as a team of auditors linked to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), the two largest creditors of the Development Bank of Rwanda, began investigating the financial scandal following the declaration of bankruptcy. The auditors requested Turatsinze's cooperation in their investigations, as he was a key player in establishing the facts. That was the reason for his silencing. In 2016, Paul Kagame traveled to Maputo to negotiate with Filipe Nyusi the extradition

of Rwandans wanted by the justice of that country and believed to be hiding in Mozambique. At the time, the press reported that Kigali justice was looking for at least 12 Rwandan citizens associated with crimes related to the 1994 genocide, who it believes are living in Mozambique as refugees. But the government of Mozambique did not accept the request and claimed that the matter was sensitive and needed careful analysis. Meanwhile, the recent rapprochement between the Mozambican and Rwandan Presidents raises fears that Maputo is more open to extrajudicial extraditions of Rwandan citizens based in Mozambique in exchange for likely support from Kigali in combating violent extremism and terrorism in Cabo Delgado. In late April, Nyusi was in Kigali where he and Paul Kagame discussed Rwanda's "experience in combating terrorism and violent extremism." In fact, the President of Mozambique was scouting for military support from Rwanda, and days later, a group of Rwandan Army officers was in Cabo Delgado to assess the conditions for aid in the fight against jihadists.

Other victims in South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda

In addition to Mozambique, the Kigali regime has killed several people in other African countries. In 2010, the former Chief of Staff of the Rwandan Army and former ally of Kagame, General Kayumba Nyamwasa, survived two attacks in South Africa, and a South African court confirmed that people at the behest of the Rwandan government were behind the two assassination attempts. Also in South Africa, Colonel Patrick Karegeya, a former Rwandan Intelligence Chief who be-


came a critic of Kagame's policies, was found dead in a Johannesburg hotel in January 2014. Already in Kenya, two former allies of Kagame were found dead under strange circumstances, namely former Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga (1998) and Colonel Theoneste Lizinde (1996). In 2011, Charles Ingabire, Director of an online newspaper Inyenyeri News and a critic of the Kigali regime, was killed in Kampala, Uganda's capital, where he had taken refuge.



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