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7 June 2011

Human Rights Council  
Seventeenth Session  
Item 6

Consideration of Universal Periodic Review Report on Rwanda

*Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative's Oral Statement*

Thank you Mr. President

CHRI notes the willingness of the Rwandan government to: revise its media laws in accordance with international standards; ensure freedom of expression by protecting journalists and human rights defenders; revise genocide laws to meet international standards; and reform the judiciary while ending the *gacaca* court system. CHRI further notes that Rwanda believes that it is already giving effect to implementing these measures.

From its observations, CHRI would like to point out that Rwanda currently has a long way to go in achieving effective implementation. We question the reality of progress given allegations of brutality and miscarriage of justice in the treatment of dissent. Looking ahead at the intervening four years before Rwanda's second review, we would like to emphasise that within this period implementation must be in letter and spirit. In particular, aspects of these issues that touch fundamental human rights should be immediately prioritised for earliest possible implementation.

Additionally, Rwanda should immediately proceed to fully implement all international treaties it has ratified including CERD and ratify and implement others that it has expressed its intentions to become party to. While it is commendable that Rwanda has managed to submit almost all reports due under treaties that it is a party to, Rwanda should respond to communications from the Human Rights Committee and implement the body's observations. Rwanda should also demonstrate its willingness to invite UN Special Procedures by issuing an open invitation at the earliest.

Rwanda's implementation of human rights recommendations will not have their fullest effect unless fundamental freedoms are guaranteed within the country. These freedoms include the freedom of association and the freedom of expression. In order to implement UPR recommendations meaningfully Rwanda should ensure that:

- Free speech and dissent are permitted in the country;
- Civil society and human right defenders have the ability to freely associate;
- Space is available, in accordance with freedoms guaranteed in the ICCPR, for unhindered, free political participation by Rwandans.

Thank you

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