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## AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TO MONITOR THE TRIAL OF PAUL RUSESABAGINA IN RWANDA

This statement can be attributed to a spokesperson for the Clooney Foundation for Justice or for the American Bar Association Center for Human Rights. For further inquiries, please contact [info@cfj.org](mailto:info@cfj.org) or [abanews@americanbar.org](mailto:abanews@americanbar.org).

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The Clooney Foundation for Justice and the American Bar Association Center for Human Rights announced today that the ABA Center for Human Rights intends to monitor the upcoming trial of Paul Rusesabagina in Rwanda as part of CFJ's TrialWatch initiative. Mr. Rusesabagina, whose actions to save lives during the Rwandan genocide were dramatized in the film *Hotel Rwanda*, is a vocal critic of Rwanda's current ruling party, which he has accused of committing human rights violations. He has been charged **with forming an armed group, financing terrorism, complicity in kidnapping, and armed robbery, among other offenses.**

Mr. Rusesabagina disappeared on August 27, 2020 in Dubai. On August 31, 2020, the Rwanda Investigation Bureau announced that Mr. Rusesabagina was in their custody and, in **a series of tweets**, alleged that he "[wa]s suspected to be the founder, leader, sponsor and member of violent, armed, extremist terror outfits including MRCD and PDR-Ihumure."

Mr. Rusesabagina's family have alleged that **he was initially denied access to counsel of his choosing and to medication.** Further, Rwandan President Paul Kagame has publicly asserted Mr. Rusesabagina's guilt in the weeks since his arrest, **stating:** "Rusesabagina heads a group of terrorists that have killed Rwandans. He will have to pay for these crimes."

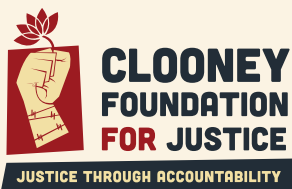
Rwanda is party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Under these treaties, it has an obligation to respect Mr. Rusesabagina's right to a fair trial, including the right to legal counsel of his choosing and the right to be presumed innocent.

Trial monitoring, which entails sending a neutral observer into court to observe trial proceedings, permits an impartial assessment of whether a trial meets regional and international standards. George and Amal Clooney stated, "Our TrialWatch monitors will be on hand to ensure that the proceedings adhere to international standards of due process and that Mr. Rusesabagina will be given a fair and transparent trial."

President Kagame has **stated** that Mr. Rusesabagina's trial will be open. **The Clooney Foundation for Justice and the ABA Center for Human Rights call on the Government of Rwanda to follow through on this assurance and facilitate public access to Mr. Rusesabagina's trial, including by allowing international trial monitors to observe the proceedings.**

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On September 14, the trial court held an initial hearing, during which Mr. Rusesabagina was formally charged. Mr. Rusesabagina sought **bail** on grounds of ill-health. The prosecution requested that he be detained for a further month while the investigation continued. A decision on bail is expected on September 17.



The Clooney Foundation for Justice's *TrialWatch* initiative monitors and grades the fairness of trials of vulnerable people around the world, including journalists, women and girls, religious minorities, LGBTQ persons and human rights defenders. Using this data, *TrialWatch* advocates for victims and is developing a Global Justice Ranking measuring national courts' compliance with international human rights standards.



The *American Bar Association (ABA)* is the largest voluntary association of lawyers and legal professionals in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.

The *ABA Center for Human Rights* has monitored trials and provided pro bono assistance to at-risk human rights defenders in over 60 countries. It is an implementing partner in the Clooney Foundation for Justice's *TrialWatch* initiative.