

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

RWANDA

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Research Directorate
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Official name

Republic of Rwanda.

Geography

The Republic of Rwanda is located in eastern Central Africa, south of the equator. It borders the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east and Burundi to the south. The total area of the country is 26,338 km², comprising 24,948 km² of land and 1,390 km² of water. It has a temperate climate and two rainy seasons, one from February to April and another from November to January. Most of the country is savannah grassland, and most of the population lives in rural areas.

Population and density

Population: 9,907,509 people (July 2007 estimate).

Density: Rwanda has the highest population density in Africa. According to mid-2005 estimates, its density is 350.6 people per km².

Principal cities and populations

Kigali (capital): 8,200,000 people (2002 estimate).

Languages

Rwanda has three official languages: Kinyarwanda, French and English. Kiswahili is also commonly used, particularly in commercial centres.

Religions

Roman Catholic 56.5%, Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, indigenous beliefs 0.1%, no religion 1.7% (2006 estimate).

Ethnic groups

Hutu 84% to 85%, Tutsi 15% and Twa (pygmy) 1%.

Demographics

Population growth rate: 2.77% (2007 estimate).

Infant mortality rate: 85.27 deaths / 1,000 live births.

Life expectancy at birth: 49 years.

Fertility rate: 5.37 children born / woman.

Literacy rate: 70.4% of people 15 years of age and older can read and write (2003 estimate).

Currency

Rwandan franc (RWF).

526.159 Rwandan francs = 1 Canadian dollar.¹

National holidays

2007: 1 January (New Year's Day), 28 January (Democracy Day), 7 April (National Mourning Day), 9 April (Easter Monday), 1 May (Labour Day), 17 May (Ascension Day), 1 July (Independence Day), 1 August (Harvest Festival), 15 August (Assumption), 8 September (Culture Day), 25 September (Kamarampaka Day, anniversary of 1961 referendum), 1 October (Armed Forces Day), 1 November (All Saints' Day), 25 December (Christmas).

2008: 1 January (New Year's Day), 28 January (Democracy Day), 24 March (Easter Monday), 7 April (National Mourning Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 1 May (Ascension Day), 1 July (Independence Day), 1 August (Harvest Festival), 15 August (Assumption), 8 September (Culture Day), 25 September (Kamarampaka Day, anniversary of 1961 referendum), 1 October (Armed Forces Day), 1 November (All Saints' Day), 25 December (Christmas).

Head of state and government

Head of state: President Paul Kagame was first elected on 17 April 2000 by the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers. He was sworn in on 22 April 2000. He was re-elected by popular vote on 25 August 2003 and was sworn in on 12 September 2003.

Head of government: Prime Minister Bernard Makusa was first appointed by President Kagame on 8 March 2000 and re-appointed to the same position by President Kagame on 11 October 2003.

Form of government

Rwanda is an independent republic. The president of the republic acts as the head of state, protector of the constitution, guarantor of national unity and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president appoints the prime minister, who heads the Council of Ministers. Ministers are appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister. The prime minister is the head of government.

Legislative structure

According to Rwanda's most recent constitution, approved by referendum in May 2003 and put into effect on 4 June 2003, Rwanda has a bicameral parliament that consists of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate.

The Chamber of Deputies has 80 deputies, of whom 53 are directly elected by popular vote and 27 indirectly (2 youth representatives, 1 disabilities representative and 24 female representatives). The Senate has 26 members who are indirectly elected: 12 are elected by local government councils, 2 by academic institutions, and the remaining 12 are appointed (8 by the President and 4 by the Political Parties' Forum, a regulatory body).

Administrative divisions

In October 2005, the 2003 constitution was amended, reducing the number of provinces from 12 to 5, the number of districts from 106 to 30, and the number of "sectors" (local administrative units) from 1,545 to 416. The land reform came into effect on

1 January 2006. The five provinces of Rwanda are the East Province, the City of Kigali, the North Province, the South Province and the West Province.

The 30 districts are Bugesera, Burera, Gakenke, Gasabo, Gatsibo, Gicumbi, Gisagara, Huye, Kamonyi, Karongi, Kayonza, Kicukiro, Kirehe, Muhanga, Musanze, Ngoma, Ngororero, Nyabihu, Nyagatare, Nyamagabe, Nyamasheke, Nyanza, Nyarugenge, Nyaruguru, Rubavu, Ruhango, Rulindo, Rusizi, Rutsiro, and Rwamagana. Each district is headed by an elected mayor.

Judicial system

Rwanda has a Supreme Court, a High Court of the Republic, and provincial, district and municipal tribunals. There are also specialized judicial bodies—*gacaca* and military courts. The *gacaca* courts try cases of genocide or other crimes against humanity committed between 1 October 1990 and 31 December 1994. The Military Tribunal and the High Military Court have jurisdiction in military cases.

Elections

In Rwanda, citizens 18 years and over have the right to vote. The president is elected by popular vote for a seven-year term and can be re-elected for a second term. Deputies serve five-year terms and senators serve eight-year terms. The last presidential election was held on 25 August 2003. Paul Kagame was elected president with 95.05% of the vote. Faustin Twagiramungu, the defeated candidate in the presidential election, contested the results, claiming there were significant irregularities. However, the Supreme Court and international observers declared that the election had been free and fair. The most recent legislative elections were held from 29 September 2003 to 3 October 2003. In the vote for the 53 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (Front patriotique rwandais, FPR), President Kagame's party, won a landslide 40 seats, followed by the Social Democratic Party (Parti social démocrate, PSD) with 7 seats, and the Liberal Party (Parti libéral, PL) with 6 seats. The 26 senators were also indirectly elected or appointed. The FPR joined forces with the Centrist Democratic Party (Parti démocrate centriste, PDC), the Ideal Democratic Party (Parti démocratique idéal, PDI), the Rwandan Socialist Party (Parti socialiste rwandais, PSR) and the Rwandan People's Democratic Union (Union démocratique du peuple rwandais, UDPR) in the legislative elections. The 2003 presidential and legislative elections were the first since the end of the genocide.

Defence

The minimum age for voluntary military service is 16 years. Mandatory military service was abolished in 2001.

The Rwandan Defence Forces (Forces rwandaises de défense, FRD) numbered approximately 33,000 personnel in November 2006: 32,000 personnel in the army and 1,000 personnel in the air force. There were also approximately 2,000 members of local defence forces. The 2006 defence budget is estimated at 70,000 million Rwandan francs (approximately 136,009 million Canadian dollars²).

Media

Freedom of the press and freedom of information are guaranteed under Article 34 of the constitution.

Rwanda has two news agencies, the Rwandan News Agency (Agence rwandaise de presse, ARP) and the Rwandan Information Office (Office rwandais d'information, ORINFOR). ORINFOR is run by the Prime Minister's Office in Charge of Information. ORINFOR also publishes two newspapers, *La Nouvelle Relève* and *Imvaho*. *Imvaho* or *Imvaho*, which means "truth," is published weekly in Kinyarwanda and has a circulation of 51,000, while *La Nouvelle Relève* is published monthly in French and has a circulation of 1,700.

There are no daily newspapers in Rwanda. The bi-weekly *Umuseso*, published in Kinyarwanda, is the most independent publication in Rwanda. The *Rwanda Herald* is also an independent newspaper.

Radio Rwanda is a government radio station that broadcasts programs daily in Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili and French. Télévision Rwanda, a state-owned television station, is the only Rwandan television station.

In 1999, the number of televisions was estimated at 864,000. In 2006, the number of Internet users was approximately 65,000.

United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Rankⁱ

Value: 0.450/1 (2004).

Rank: 158 out of 177 countries (2004).

United Nations Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Country Rankⁱⁱ

Value: 0.449/1 (2004).

Rank: 119 out of 136 countries (2004).

Population below the national poverty line

60% (2001 estimate).

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)ⁱⁱⁱ

Score: 2.5/10 (2006).

Rank: 121 out of 163 countries.

ⁱ The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are as follows: 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low human development). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value.

ⁱⁱ The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Transparency International CPI is based on composite survey data from 16 polls and 10 independent institutions. The data reflects the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (163).

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)^{iv}

Transparency International did not publish information on Rwanda in its 2006 Global Corruption Barometer.

[Information compiled from: *Europa 2007 2007*, 3804-3820; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1033-1040; *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 501-503; *Rwanda 23 Aug. 2007a*; *Rwanda 23 Aug. 2007b*; *Rwanda n.d.a*; *Rwanda n.d.b*; *TI 2006*; *UN 2006*; *US 14 Sept. 2007*; *US 6 Sept. 2007*]

2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The year 2003 marked the end of the transition period that culminated in the creation of a civil government, the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of presidential and legislative elections.³ The 2003 constitution specifically allows the government to ban political parties formed on the basis of ethnic, tribal, regional or religious membership.⁴ The government used the provision to ban the Republican Democratic Movement (Mouvement démocratique républicain, MDR), the Christian Democratic Party (Parti démocrate Chrétien, PDC), and other smaller parties before the 2003 election.⁵ Some opposition parties and international human rights organizations claimed that the provision of the constitution was enacted merely to bolster the FPR's political power.⁶ According to the final report of the European Union's mission to observe the elections in Rwanda, [translation] "the legislative elections were held with practically no opposition as all the parties participating in the election called for people to vote for Paul Kagame in the presidential election, and potential opponents were prevented from participating in the election before the campaign or a few days before the vote."⁷ According to the same source, the presidential and legislative elections were peaceful and well organized, despite certain cases of irregularities and fraud on the election days.⁸ Meanwhile, the *gacaca* courts had a backlog of approximately 95,000 cases by the end of 2005.⁹ The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) convicted 22 people in March 2005.¹⁰ Rwandan Hutus criticized the ICTR for its slow pace and because no Tutsis had been indicted.¹¹ In mid-2006, reports indicated a possible power struggle within the party in power.¹²

3. POLITICAL PARTIES

Rwandan Patriotic Front (Front patriotique rwandais, FPR): The FPR, also known as the Inkotanyi, was founded in 1990.¹³ Created by Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda, its membership consists mainly of Tutsis and the party launched an attack on Rwanda in October 1990.¹⁴ Most of the party's original leaders were killed in clashes with government forces in late 1990 and early 1991.¹⁵ The FPR is currently the dominant political force in Rwanda.¹⁶ Paul Kagame was elected president of the FPR in 1998 and later won the presidential election in 2003.¹⁷ In the 2003 legislative election, the FPR headed a coalition that included the Centrist Democratic Party (Parti démocrate centriste), the Ideal Democratic Party (Parti démocrate idéal), the Rwandan People's Democratic

^{iv} The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state. Scores range from 1 (not at all corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt).

Union (Union démocratique du peuple rwandais) and the Rwandan Socialist Party (Parti socialiste rwandais).¹⁸ The coalition took 73.78 percent of the vote and 40 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, 33 of which were won by the FPR alone.¹⁹ The FPR is currently headed by the President of the Republic, Paul Kagame.²⁰

Social Democratic Party (Parti social-démocrate, PSD): The PSD, a Hutu party, is one of the three opposition parties to be recognized under the 1991 constitution; it began to take part in government coalitions in April 1992.²¹ In 1994, the assassination of its leader, Félicien Gatabazi, ignited a wave of violence in Rwanda that escalated to genocide.²² In the 2003 legislative election, the PSD won 12 percent of the vote and seven seats in the Chamber of Deputies.²³ The current PSD leader is Vincent Biruta, who also chairs the Senate.²⁴

Liberal Party (Parti libéral, PL): Established in 1991, the PL split into two factions in late 1993 and early 1994, one of which joined the government coalition formed by the FPR following its military victory in July 1994.²⁵ The PL was restructured in 2003.²⁶ In the 2003 legislative election, the PL won 10 percent of the vote and six seats in the Chamber of Deputies.²⁷ In the 2003 presidential election, the PL supported Paul Kagame, the FPR candidate, who later became president.²⁸ Prosper Higiro is the PL's current leader.²⁹

Centrist Democratic Party (Parti démocrate centriste, PDC): The PDC was founded in 1990 as the Christian Democratic Party (Parti démocrate Chrétien).³⁰ Because the Christian Democratic Party was banned from the 2003 presidential election, the party reformed under the name Centrist Democratic party (Parti démocrate centriste, PDC) just before the 2003 legislative election.³¹ In the 2003 legislative election, the PDC joined forces with the FPR and took three seats in the Chamber of Deputies.³²

Ideal Democratic Party (Parti démocratique idéal, PDI): Established in 1991 as the Islamic Democratic Party (Parti démocratique islamique),³³ the PDI joined forces with the FPR in the 2003 legislative election and won two seats in the Chamber of Deputies.³⁴ It is currently headed by André Bumaya Habib.³⁵

Rwandan People's Democratic Union (Union démocratique du peuple rwandais, UDPR): Created in 1992,³⁶ the UDPR joined forces with the FPR in the 2003 legislative election and won one seat in the Chamber of Deputies.³⁷ Adrien Rangira is the leader of the UDPR.³⁸

Rwandan Socialist Party (Parti socialiste rwandais, PSR): Established in 1991, the PSR is a worker's rights party.³⁹ It joined forces with the FPR in the 2003 legislative election for the Chamber of Deputies and won one seat in the Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁰ It is currently headed by Medard Rutijanwa.⁴¹

Other parties:⁴² Parti pour le progrès et la concorde (Party for Progress and Concord, which was created after the MDR was banned); Parti progressiste de la jeunesse rwandaïse, PPJR (Progressive Party for Rwandan Youth); Parti républicain rwandaïse,

Parerwa (Rwandan Republican Party); Rassemblement travailliste pour la démocratie, RTD (Workers' Rally for Democracy).

Other political parties established outside Rwanda:⁴³ Alliance démocratique rwandaise (Rwandan Democratic Alliance); Alliance pour la démocratie et la reconstruction nationale (Alliance for Democracy and National Recovery); Forces de résistance pour la démocratie, FRD (Resistance Forces for Democracy); Rassemblement pour la démocratie et le retour, RDR (Rally for Democracy and Return), also called Rassemblement pour le retour des réfugiés et la démocratie au Rwanda (Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy to Rwanda); Union du peuple rwandais, UPR (Rwandan People's Union).

Banned parties: Rwanda's 2003 constitution enabled the government to ban political parties that might stir up civil unrest or heighten ethnic tensions.⁴⁴ The day before the 2003 elections, the Rwandan government used the provision of the constitution to ban the following parties: Parti pour la démocratie et le renouveau, PDR (Party for Democracy and Renewal), also called Ubuyanja (Renewal);⁴⁵ Mouvement démocratique républicain, MDR (Republican Democratic Movement);⁴⁶ Parti démocratique Chrétien, PDC (Christian Democratic Party).⁴⁷

4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS

Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda, FDLR): In 2004 and early 2005, the FDLR was described as one of the main resistance groups outside Rwanda.⁴⁸ In March 2005, the FDLR issued a formal apology for its role in the 1994 killings in Rwanda; in April 2005, it announced its plans to disarm, leave the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and return to Rwanda to try to become an official political party.⁴⁹ However, in a statement issued on 4 October 2005, the United Nations Security Council indicated that the FDLR had still not left the DRC and that it had failed to disarm as promised.⁵⁰ FDLR leader, Ignace Murwanashyaka, was arrested in Germany in April 2006 for violating immigration laws.⁵¹ The German government refused Rwanda's request to extradite him.⁵²

¹ OANDA 10 Sept. 2007.

² OANDA 13 Sept. 2007.

³ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.

⁴ Rwanda 4 June 2003, Art. 54.

⁵ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.

⁶ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1035.

⁷ EU 2003, 31.

⁸ EU 2003, 34.

⁹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.

¹⁰ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.

¹¹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.

¹² *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.

¹³ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.

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- ¹⁴ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
¹⁵ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
¹⁶ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
¹⁷ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
¹⁸ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
¹⁹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
²⁰ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
²¹ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 503; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
²² *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037-1038.
²³ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 503.
²⁴ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038.
²⁵ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038; *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 502.
²⁶ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
²⁷ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817; *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 502.
²⁸ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 502.
²⁹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038; *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership 7 Jan. 2007*.
³⁰ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
³¹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
³² *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037; *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 502.
³³ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
³⁴ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 502.
³⁵ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038; *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
³⁶ *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
³⁷ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 503.
³⁸ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 503; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038; *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
³⁹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038; *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817.
⁴⁰ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 503.
⁴¹ *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 503; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038.
⁴² *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038.
⁴³ Compiled from *Europa 2007 2007*, 3817; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038-1039.
⁴⁴ Rwanda 4 June 2003, Art. 52.
⁴⁵ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038.
⁴⁶ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1038.
⁴⁷ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1037.
⁴⁸ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1039.
⁴⁹ *PHW 2007 2007*, 1039; AI 28 Sept. 2005.
⁵⁰ UN 4 Oct. 2005.
⁵¹ BBC 4 Apr. 2006; *PHW 2007 2007*, 1039.
⁵² *PHW 2007 2007*, 1039.

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