

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/rwanda-journalist-cleared-after-three-31-07-2012,43137.html>

Africa - Rwanda

Pair freed

Journalist cleared after three months in prison, another bailed pending trial

1 August 2012

The journalist **Habarugira Epaphrodite** was released yesterday after spending three months in prison. A day earlier, he was acquitted by the Muhanga district court in southern Rwanda, which ruled that the charges against him were without foundation.

In another case, **Idriss Gassana Byiringiro**, a journalism student and reporter for the newspaper *Chronicles*, was also freed pending trial. He got out of prison today. The Kacyru lower court in Kigali ordered his release on bail to allow him to continue his studies at Butare University. He has to report to the court every week and must not leave the capital except to attend classes. His case is expected to go to trial at the end of August.

2012.07.31 - Journalist cleared after three months in prison, another stays in custody

Habarugira Epaphrodite, a former journalist with the community radio station *Huguka*, was acquitted by the Muhanga district court in southern Rwanda yesterday after being held in custody since 24 April. He is due to be released today.

Epaphrodite was charged with "minimizing" the 1994 Tutsi genocide and "spreading genocide ideology". The prosecution had asked for a six-year prison sentence and a fine of 200,000 Rwandan francs (approx. 260 euros). The judge found the charges were without foundation.

"We are relieved at this verdict," Reporters Without Borders said. "However, the fact of the matter is that Habarugira Epaphrodite has spent three months in prison for no reason. The justice authorities have blown a simple on-air slip of the tongue out of all proportion. We hope that the journalist can quickly find work and that this incident will not harm his career."

Epaphrodite was arrested after reading a report about ceremonies marking the 18th anniversary of the genocide, in which he mixed up the Kinyarwanda words for "victims" and "survivors," making it sound as though he approved of the genocide.

He was fired by the radio station and [proceedings were brought against him](#)

In another case, **Idriss Gassana Byiringiro**, a journalism student and reporter for the newspaper *Chronicles*, was remanded in custody for 30 days on the orders of the public prosecutor to allow time to prepare a case against him. He was previously detained on 17 July for [fabricating a story that he had been kidnapped](#)

He told a news conference that he had invented the incident, then later withdrew the statement, alleging that he was indeed abducted on 15 June. However, having originally hinted that he believed the intelligence services were responsible, he dropped this assertion, describing his kidnappers as "unidentified". The judge is expected to rule today on whether the journalist should be freed pending trial.

"We urge the judge to release the journalist immediately so that he can prepare his defence as part of a fair trial. Since the start of this case, we have been critical of the over-zealous reaction of the police authorities, who should have used their right of reply in the newspaper *Chronicles* rather than taking the defendant into custody," Reporters Without Borders concluded.

Photo : the journalists Habarugira Epaphrodite and Idriss Gassama Byiringiro
