

25th Commemorations of the Genocide against the Tutsis: "Mr. President, it is time to make a statement of truth! "

Mr. President,

It has been 25 years since the genocide against the Tutsis has been perpetrated in Rwanda. Over the course of three months, more than one million people were exterminated by extremists coming together as the Hutu Power movement, with a massive participation of the population. The consequences of this genocide are still felt today. This past, particularly for France, does not pass.

Since your election, you have sent signals of hope that the time has come to put an end to the French position characterized by silence and denial since the genocide took place. After 25 years, it is finally time to take the necessary steps in order to shed light on the truth and pursue justice.

Mr. President, next April 7th your place is in Kigali, amongst the highest representatives of the international community. By the side of the survivors. France has cancelled its participation at the 20th commemoration of the genocide; your presence this year would repair this disgrace.

What survivors, youth, French civil society, Rwanda, and Europe are expecting from you first and foremost is that truth be told.

Even though genocide denial persists in its attempt to manipulate History, you must state the obvious : in 1994, in Rwanda, a genocide has been perpetrated against the Tutsi people.

You must further explain the words spoken in Kigali in 2010 from your predecessor, former President of the French Republic Nicolas Sarkozy, who recognized that "*errors of judgement and political errors have been made here and have produced absolutely dramatic consequences*". Twenty-five years after the genocide, the time of a whole generation, it is necessary to take this second step : if you wish to open a future relieved from the burden of the past misdeeds, it is time to speak out about those "errors". It is by stating the difficult truths, challenging yet unavoidable, that a path of humanity can be drawn.

Because it has been found for fact : a policy of collaboration has been carried out before, during and after the genocide by a handful of high ranking state officials at the end of president Francois Mitterrand's second mandate. This policy has been concealed. France, its population and its institutions, such as the Parliament, have been willingly kept in the dark. The Republic cannot be held accountable for the "errors" committed during the mandate of Francois Mitterrand. This must be acknowledged.

You must place justice at the heart of this future. Only three trials against genocide perpetrators have taken place since 1994. The impunity that benefits the perpetrators and their accomplices is unacceptable. In order for justice to be served while expanding the field of knowledge, all archives must be opened and made accessible, as pledged in 2015 by your predecessor, president Francois Hollande, a promise that has still not been carried out.

At last, your words must pave the way to the era of a new relation between the French and Rwandese societies. Youth will be its beating heart. It would be unfair to make youth bear this tragic heritage. Enabling young people from the two countries to meet, share their stories, their experiences, their hopes and their dreams, would be the best way of allowing them to shape a shared and peaceful future, for the current generation as well as for those of the future.

Mr. President, France has an appointment with History. Speaking words of truth, serving justice and helping youth of both countries to come together is the path to follow in order to let the past pass, to pay tribute to the victims, to help ease the suffering of the survivors and to allow the French and the Rwandese societies to look together towards the future.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Benjamin Abtan, President of the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement – EGAM and Coordinator of the Elie Wiesel Network of Parliamentarians in Europe for the Prevention of Mass Crimes; **Egide Gatari**, President of the Group of Former Students Survivors of the Genocide - GAERG (Rwanda) ; **Bernard Kouchner**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (France); **Beate, Serge and Arno Klarsfeld**, Leaders of the Sons and Daughters of the Jewish Deportees of France and Lawyer (France and Germany); **Emmanuel Muneza**, National Coordinator of the Group of Former Students Survivors of the Genocide - GAERG (Rwanda); **Patrick de Saint-Exupéry**, Journalist and Writer (France); **Leymah Gbowee**, Nobel Peace Prize (Liberia); **Jean Pierre Dusingemungu and Egide Nkuranga**, President and Vice-President of Ibuka (Rwanda); **Richard Prasquier**, Vice-President of the Foundation for the Memory of the Holocaust and Former President of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France (France); **Ara Toranian and Frank Papazian**, Co-presidents of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Associations of France - CCAF (France); **Rithy Panh**, Survivor, Writer and Filmmaker (Cambodia); **Advija Ibrahimovic**, Spokesperson of Women of Srebrenica (Bosnia-Herzegovina); **Daniel Cohn-Bendit**, Former Member of the European Parliament (France, Germany); **Mario Vargas Llosa**, Nobel Prize in Literature (Peru); **Rich Roberts**, Nobel Prize in Medicine (UK); **Marie Darrieussecq**, Writer (France); **Asli Erdogan**, Writer (Turkey) ; **Marie Efraim Zuroff**, Director of The Simon Wiesenthal Center (Israel); **Charles Adeogun-Phillips**, Former Lead UN Genocide Crimes Prosecutor (UK) ; **David Cormand**, National Secretary of Europe Ecology The Greens - EELV (France); **Benoît Hamon**, Founder of Génération.s (France) ; **Jean-Christophe Lagarde**, President of the Union of Democrats and Independents – UDI (France) ; **Fabien Roussel**, Secretary-general of the French Communist Party - PCF (France); 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