

# *ISHEMA Party- Parti ISHEMA- Ishyaka ISHEMA*



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OPEN LETTER TO H.E. Peter H. VROOMAN

Ambassador of the United States of America to Rwanda

2657 Avenue de la Gendarmerie (Kacyiru)

P.O. Box 28 Kigali

Rwanda

Montreal, October 11, 2020.

## **RE: OUR REACTION ON THE STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT (SOFA) SIGNED WITH RWANDA**

Dear sir,

With reference to the above caption, and subsequent to your embassy spokesperson's recent comments published The Chronicles of September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020; on behalf of Ishema Party, I take the liberty to contact your office in order to make clear our position which sparked the whole debate on the SOFA issue.

1. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, we asked<sup>1</sup> the government of Rwanda to make accessible the content of the SOFA, which was not done.
2. Thanks to the American authorities, we were able to have access to this agreement. The Government of Rwanda held it confidential because they know how sensitive it is.
3. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, we released a communiqué<sup>2</sup> that brought to the attention of all Rwandans the content of the SOFA. A translated version by our team was also published. By the same communiqué, we recommended that the SOFA be nullified due to its unconstitutionality.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ishema-party.org/en/communiqués-amatangazo/198-the-rwandan-government-has-a-duty-to-make-accessible-the-agreements-signed-with-foreign-countries.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://ishema-party.org/en/communiqués-amatangazo/211-u-rwanda-si-igihugu-kigurishwa-kwamagana-amasezerano-u-rwanda-rwasinyanye-na-usa.html>

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4. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the US embassy spokesperson in Kigali made comments in The Chronicles<sup>3</sup>, a local online news outlet. She seemed to have been told lies on what our concerns are.

Dear sir,

In early 1990s, Rwanda was attacked by some elements from the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) of Rwanda origin. During the war that culminated into genocide of 1994, peace talks were held between two belligerent sides in Arusha, Tanzania, to draw the future of our nation torn apart by the armed conflict. One of the conclusions in the Arusha peace agreement was to be careful with military co-operations with foreign forces. The French troops that operated in Rwanda under military cooperation were obligated to leave the country immediately. The Constitution of 2003 as amended to date, cemented this principle in its Article 169, (section 1) which states:

***“Birabujijwe gukora amasezerano mpuzamahanga yemera gutuza ingabo z’amahanga mu gihugu”.***

The article 167 of the same Law, section 1, determines what needs to be done, how and who does it in regards of such international agreements. The Law was totally ignored for the recently signed SOFA.

Dear sir,

We are cognizant that the US has no duty to watch over the implementation and respect of Rwanda's Constitution and other land's laws. In fact, we are happy that you were able to strike such a beefy deal in the interest and on behalf of the American people. We would have sought to achieve the same for our own people. Our concerns are as follow:

- i. The Government of Rwanda led by the RPF betrayed our people by violating the Constitution. It is not the first time and most probably not the last.
- ii. The US embassy Spokesperson, Madam Janet Deutsch quoted by The Chronicles, seems to answer wrong questions, and obviously, gives a wrong answer. First, the concern is not whether the US will build a military base in Rwanda, they can use the bases already in place. Rather, every real patriotic citizen of modern time is concerned by the presence of foreign forces in Rwanda and its monitoring by Rwandan people. Second, it is not because other countries have accepted to sign

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.chronicles.rw/2020/09/15/no-american-military-base-planned-in-rwanda-us-embassy/>

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the SOFA with the US that Rwanda must accept it, especially when no single provision mentions what our people will gain from this bilateral contract. Third, after conducting a thorough investigation we discovered that no SOFA with similar content has ever been signed by any other country in the world.

Dear sir,

Bearing in our minds and appreciating the great contribution of the American people towards Rwanda's development, Ishema Party would like to bring to your attention the following:

1. Any agreement that is concluded against the Constitution's provisions is null and void.
2. The government led by the RPF seeks to hold the US government on its side by wrongfully conceding too much in written agreements for securing your diplomatic protection in illegal national and international litigations. We both are aware of many in which the RPF is guilty. The Government of the USA can deal with Rwanda as a nation that will last forever, rather than with a small clique that committed war crimes, and whose existence is only ephemeral.
3. In our humble view, it is high time to start writing new chapters on the right side of Rwandan history. The USA seeks to be champion of good governance, democracy, and human rights. And this cannot be accomplished by shielding dictatorship while there is possibility to secure similar, better and even more advantages by promoting and supporting leaders of the New Generation.

God bless Rwanda

God bless America

Chaste GAHUNDE

Vice President, Ishema Party

