

Opinion

Human Rights Watch; the speck in its eye

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On 15 August 2019, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a story titled, “Rwanda : Disappearances Require Credible Investigations.”

The title is redundant : Of course disappearances, like all circumstances in which crime may be suspected, require investigations.

However, HRW wants to peddle the narrative that Rwanda’s judicial system cannot be relied upon to conduct “credible” investigations in general, and into the supposed disappearance in particular.

Of course there is no basis for such characterisation and when the basis of their claims are challenged with evidence, it becomes clear that HRW’s aim – as is that of similar NGOs – is to try to exert undue influence in order to subvert the autonomy of judicial processes in Rwanda, something that would never be entertained in their own countries.

In his detailed exposé, *The Travesty of Human Rights Watch on Rwanda*, former American diplomat Richard Johnson amply demonstrates this phenomenon, showing how HRW, and similar organisations, have done everything in their power to try to supplant judicial systems in countries they feel they can bully, like Rwanda.

After reading that, it becomes clear that every once in a while a smear report must be released to serve the purposes that Ambassador Johnson presents in his painstakingly elaborate and compelling research.

For instance, there is no evidence to suggest that judicial investigations are any lesser credible in Rwanda than they are in, say, the United States where HRW is located.

However, one is hard-pressed to see the organisation publish similarly sensational headlines because the aim is to feed a certain narrative to an unsuspecting audience that is urged to make financial contributions in order to intensify this bullying in the name of promoting human rights. It is irresponsible, to say the least.

In addition to Ambassador Johnson’s revelations, there are two patterns. One, these so-called human rights organisations tend to fabricate stories of victims of state abuse.

However, when evidence to the contrary emerges, they cannot muster the courage to make a public apology. They ride out the embarrassment in silence until enough time elapses for them to be able to issue yet another report reprising the same accusations.

Resurrecting the dead

In October 2017 right after the presidential elections, HRW published a story about Rwandans who supposedly had been executed by the government. The organisation didn't bother cross-checking whether the people it had claimed were dead were indeed dead.

HRW wasn't very lucky, however. An investigation by Rwanda's National Human Rights Commission confirmed that in fact the people in the HRW report were alive and kicking.

On 14 October of that year, different media houses, including The New Times, covered the scandal.

If the dead had been resurrected, they also showed up.

On 31 October 2017, Cassien Ntamuhanga who was serving a 25-year sentence fled Mpanga prison to South Africa to join hands with his terror master Kayumba Nyamwasa.

On 8 November 2017, some media houses allied to Rwandan detractors began writing that Ntamuhanga did not flee the country as alleged; rather, that he had been killed by the Rwanda government.

However, it only took less than three months for Ntamuhanga to appear on VOA Kinyarwanda programme to announce, with pride, that he had escaped Mpanga prison and was a "free man".

A similar "disappearance" was that of BBC journalist Phocus Ndayizeye. On 25 November 2018, BBC Kinyarwanda reported that its Rwanda-based journalist Phocus Ndayizeye had been kidnapped by the government.

RIB came out to dismiss the claims of kidnap; Ndayizeye was legally under its custody accused of planning to conduct terror attacks in the City of

Kigali, using improvised explosives.

On 31 August 2016, it was reported on social media that John Ndabarasa, a journalist with SANA Radio had "disappeared," the insinuation being that he had been killed by security organs.

However, in March 2018, the same supposedly slain Ndabarasa returned to Rwanda and told fellow journalists he had gone into self-imposed exile because of paranoia that he might be associated with his brother-in-law lieutenant Mutabazi who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for terrorism.

This is more than a pattern of behavior around claims of "disappearance" and "executions." However, there is another pattern. These organisations never learn from their wanton "mistakes".

For instance, ever since the RNC has increased its operations in the DRC - with the support of Uganda - such "disappearances" have continued, and the likes of HRW deliberately fail to ask themselves why the timing.

The real unescapable reason is that it is because they are eager to find anything, however preposterous to blame on the government of Rwanda; with their "investigations" ignoring the patterns of these "disappearances."

Two top commanders of the RNC, Captain Charles Sibó and Major Habib Muthadiru were reported missing more than three years ago.

They went to Uganda, registered with UNHCR, and joined others in the DRC jungles where they became top commanders. Recent fighting in the DRC claimed the life of captain Sibó; while major Habib was captured as a prisoner of war.

Recruitment of FDLR also based in DRC has been going on in Rwanda and its fighters have been captured or killed

fighting in DRC or in Nyungwe forest having come from DRC via Burundi.

In other words, people have been “disappearing” only to end up in Uganda, Burundi and the DRC or any other place with RNC cells.

In fact, the 31 December 2018 United Nations Group of Experts report on the Congo traces the path of the “disappeared.” It gives the strongest signal for anyone interested in locating these people in what it refers to as “a network” across the region.

The pattern of these pseudo "disap-

pearances" and their associated reporting by the likes of HRW suggests a coordinated, concerted fraudulent global venture.

But since those perpetrating this fraud believe their targets can be bullied without anyone asking for accountability from these organisations, nothing will change. We can, instead, soon expect another HRW story about alleged "missing or executed persons".

Does HRW sound like an entity that should be accusing anyone of not being “credible?”