



STAND FOR OUR PARENTS

— A S S O C I A T I O N —

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

The United Nations is considering transferring our parents to Rwanda. We are their families. This is our voice.

8 May 2026



Who is speaking

Stand For Our Parents brings together the children, spouses, brothers and sisters and relatives of the detainees of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), now under the jurisdiction of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The association is being constituted as a non-profit organization under Belgian law.

We carry the voice of innocent families, none of whose members have been tried. We address today the institutions, the media and the general public, in respect of international law and institutional dialogue.

Why now

The United Nations is examining a proposed transfer of detainees currently held in Benin and Senegal to the Republic of Rwanda. The decision is imminent: the Security Council is shortly expected to consider the Secretary-General's report S/2025/786 on the future of the Mechanism. It is in this context that the fate of our parents — and that of all our families — may be decided.

On 6 April 2026, the detainees themselves addressed an official memorandum to the President of the Security Council formally expressing their opposition to this transfer. In May 2026, we, their families, addressed a formal letter to His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as to the IRMCT, the Security Council, the OHCHR, the ICRC and the African Union. This letter is available on request.



Why Rwanda is not an option

On legal grounds

Several universally recognized principles of international law preclude a transfer to the Republic of Rwanda. These are binding rules of international human rights and international criminal law from which no derogation is permitted in the present context.

- **The "Non bis in idem" principle.** Article 14, paragraph 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as Article 10 of the ICTR Statute, prohibit a person from being tried or punished twice for the same acts. Parallel proceedings having been initiated in Rwanda against persons tried by the ICTR, transferring them to Rwandan territory would, in practice, expose them to a second conviction for the same acts.
- **The principle of non-refoulement.** This customary rule of international law, enshrined in Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and in Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, prohibits any transfer to a territory where the person would be exposed to a real risk of inhuman treatment. Reports issued by Amnesty International (2024) and Human Rights Watch (July 2025) document systematic violations in Rwanda, making such risk concrete and established.
- **Respect for the will expressed.** Rule 59 of the Nelson Mandela Rules provides that prisoners shall be allocated, to the extent possible, to prisons close to their homes and places of social rehabilitation. The practice of the International Residual Mechanism, together with Security Council Resolution 2740 (2024), confirms the requirement that the detainees' consent and objections be taken into account in any designation of the State of enforcement.
- **The practice of international jurisdictions.** Ad hoc international criminal tribunals have, in their constant practice, declined to transfer convicted persons to States having a direct interest in the outcomes of the proceedings. The International Residual Mechanism, as direct heir to the ICTR, is bound by this logic.

On factual grounds

- Reports issued by recognized international organizations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch) document, in Rwanda, serious and persistent violations of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty: extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and unofficial detention facilities.
- The absence of ratification, by Rwanda, of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- The formal opposition expressed by the detainees themselves, through the collective memorandum of 6 April 2026 addressed to the President of the Security Council.



- The situation of persons acquitted or having fully served their sentences, held for years in a secure house in Niger, without clear legal status, awaiting a relocation that the international community has been unable to organize.

What a transfer would mean for our families

Beyond legal considerations, this transfer would affect innocent families — children, spouses, brothers and sisters — who have been the subject of no judicial proceedings.

- Many family members live in exile and benefit from international protection status, precisely because of the risks incurred in the event of return to, or contact with, the Rwandan authorities. A transfer of their relatives to Rwanda would place them in the practical and legal impossibility of maintaining any family link.
- Several detainees are now elderly and present significant health concerns. A transfer to a new environment, where access to appropriate care cannot be guaranteed, would constitute a serious risk for them.
- For the great majority of families, such a transfer would mean the definitive end of any possibility of visits. The children and grandchildren of the detainees, who have been the subject of no proceedings, would be deprived of any real opportunity to know or to see their parents and grandparents again.
- Members of families still in Rwanda would not be able to visit the detainees in safety.



Alternative solutions exist

Mindful that the funding of the Mechanism calls for concrete responses, we submit five avenues, all legally grounded and operationally realistic.

Option 1 — Maintenance of existing arrangements in Benin and Senegal. The detention agreements concluded with these two States (since 2009 and 2017 respectively) operate in accordance with international standards. Their maintenance, accompanied by adequate financial support from the Organization, constitutes the simplest and most economical solution.

Option 2 — A durable solution for the persons held in Niger. Independently of the situation of detainees in Benin and Senegal, the situation of the persons held in the secure house in Niger calls for an immediate response: relocation to a willing third State, the granting of clear legal status, and the guarantee of effective international protection.

Option 3 — Review of early release applications. The Directive of 15 May 2020 introduced, as a condition for any early release, a requirement of admission of guilt while 99% of these Detainees pleaded "not guilty" during their appearance before ICTR and during the proceeding till the end of their cases. Its review would allow the substantive examination, with full respect for the rights of the defence, of pending applications.

Option 4 — Designation of a neutral third State. Should a reorganization nevertheless be considered, the designation of a neutral third State, with no connection to the context giving rise to the judgments, would constitute a legitimate alternative.

Option 5 — Transfer of administrative control to existing host States. The Secretary-General's report S/2025/786 itself contemplates this option in its paragraph 28: the transfer of control over conditions of detention to current host States, while maintaining the IRMCT's judicial supervision.

What we ask, in order of urgency

- The withdrawal of the Republic of Rwanda from the list of States eligible to receive ICTR/IRMCT detainees, and the formal recording of this exclusion by the Security Council;
 - The immediate suspension of any preparatory measure for a transfer, pending consideration of the observations addressed to the institutions;
 - An immediate, dignified and lasting response to the situation of the persons held in Niger;
 - The maintenance and reinforcement of existing detention arrangements in Benin and Senegal, accompanied by the necessary funding;
 - Priority consideration of the transfer of administrative control to existing host States, within a framework of continued judicial supervision by the IRMCT (paragraph 28 of report S/2025/786);
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- The reconsideration, with due regard to the principle of non-retroactivity, of the conditions introduced by the Directive of 15 May 2020 in respect of early releases;
- A referral to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and to the Special Rapporteur on Torture, for independent opinions;
- A formal position by the African Union in support of maintaining the existing arrangements.



Our call

To diplomats and institutions — The legal arguments are solid. The principles invoked are recognized. The sources are public and verifiable. We call for careful examination of the observations transmitted, and for constructive dialogue.

To journalists — This story deserves to be told. For interviews or further information, please contact us at contact@standforourparents.org.

To human rights organizations and lawyers — Your analyses and your support are essential. The formal letter addressed to the United Nations is available on request.

To the public — Share this document. Use the hashtag **#StandForOurParents** on social media. Write to your elected representatives and ask them to raise this matter with their delegation to the United Nations before the June Security Council session. Make it known that innocent families cannot be condemned to permanent separation without ever having been tried.

What is at stake here goes beyond the fate of a few detainees. It is the question of the consistency of international justice and the respect owed to innocent families.

We will not remain silent.

Done in Brussels, on 8 May 2026.



SPOKESPERSON

Porte-parole

SIGNATURE

Jean De Dieu NSANZABANDI

NAME / NOM

8 May 2026

DATE

STAND FOR OUR PARENTS

*The families of the ICTR/IRMCT detainees
Association — being constituted under Belgian law*

*Document signed by the Spokesperson
of "Stand For Our Parents"*

C O N T A C T

Stand For Our Parents — Association
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Hashtag: #StandForOurParents

*Formal letter addressed to the United Nations available on request.
Public communication document — may be freely shared and reproduced.*