

Lawyer denied access to jailed Rwandan leader

BY AFP

KIGALI. A lawyer representing jailed Rwandan opposition figure Victoire Ingabire has said he is being blocked from seeing his client ahead of her appeal before an African rights court, according to correspondence seen by AFP Tuesday.

Ms Ingabire was convicted in December 2013 for "conspiracy in harming authorities through terrorism and war" and for minimising Rwanda's 1994 genocide, in which at least 800,000 largely Tutsi people were killed by troops and extremists of the Hutu majority.

A Hutu, she had called for also pursuing killers of her ethnic group and was a leading critic of President Paul Kagame, who took power after a Tutsi rebellion ended the genocide. She was also found guilty of spreading rumours to incite violence.

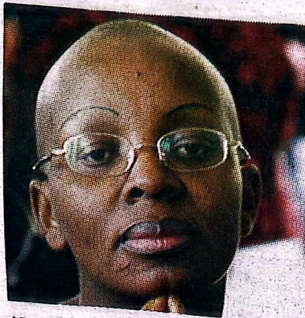
Her lawyer Mr Gatera Gashabana wrote in letters to the head of the Bar in Rwanda that "on February 5, I went to the prison to meet with my client to prepare for the hearing before the African Court on Human and People's Rights based in Arusha (Tanzania) due for March 4."

He went on to say he was told that before any visit all his documents had to be checked and that this hindrance would make it impossible to prepare for the upcoming hearing.

He demanded an end to "these excessive demands and intimidations," according to the letters released by Ms Ingabire's opposition United Democratic Forces (UDF) party, which is not officially recognised in Rwanda.

Ms Ingabire had denied the charges against her and boycotted her trial and subsequent appeal, which saw her prison sentence increased from eight to 15 years.

She left Rwanda for the Netherlands for economic training in March 1994, just two weeks before the shooting down of the airplane of Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana which triggered the genocide.



Victoire Ingabire