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Abstract

By May 2024, Rwanda was a host country to more than 135,000 refugees mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. In May 2014, Rwanda passed the Law Relating to Refugees which substantially reflects her international and regional obligations under the relevant refugee and human rights instruments. However, there is a discrepancy between the provisions of the law and the reality on the ground. This article analyses this discrepancy and the factors behind it by focusing on specific provisions of the law. In particular, the gap between theory and reality is explained by the following factors: the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state, its extraterritorial military operations and poor bilateral relations. These factors play a crucial role in determining how refugees are treated and (un) able to access their protection and rights.

1. Introduction

Rwanda has been a host to refugees for several decades. In 2014 the country enacted the Law Relating to Refugees (hereafter the 2014 Law) that substantially reflects its internationally recognized protection obligations. Despite reflecting legal protection obligations, this paper argues that this has not been the case in practice. Drawing on the work of authors like Reyntjens (2004, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2020, 2022, 2023); Straus & Waldorf (2011); Longman (2011); Thomson (2018) and others on the politics of post-genocide Rwanda as a point of departure, this article illustrates how the application of some provisions of the 2014 law has been influenced by the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state, its extraterritorial military operations and poor bilateral relations with the DRC and Burundi and ambiguous relations with Uganda. By doing so, we aim to contribute to the growing literature that highlights the politics of asylum in Africa.

After a brief history of refugee law and reception in Rwanda, the paper focuses on specific provisions of the 2014 Law, the application for asylum and refugee status, the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum (the prohibition of political and military activities in camps), refugee rights and the principle of non-refoulement. Based on scholarly and grey literature as well as systematic review of media and political discourse on post-genocide Rwanda, the article illustrates the gaps in the implementation of the 2014 Law. In particular, the article addresses

the realities faced by refugees in Rwanda like the bottlenecks of the Refugee Status Determination Committee (RSDC), problems of application for asylum and refugee status, their recruitment and involvement in military activities, violation of refugee rights and the principle of non-refoulement. Finally, the paper concludes with policy and methodological considerations.

2. Politics in post-genocide Rwanda: A brief overview

According to Reyntjens (2013, 2015), there are two radically opposed views on Rwanda. The first one is held by Bono, Pastor Rick Warren, Bill Clinton and Tony Blair as well as most aid agencies. This view looks at technocratic/bureaucratic governance and applauds the country's achievements in economic growth, education, health, agriculture, women empowerment, and market policies among others (Reyntjens, 2004, 2013, 2015). This view flows from the genocide credit enjoyed by the regime and the feelings of guilt for lack of international action to stop the genocide in 1994 (ibid). The second view is that held by most academic scholars and human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to mention but a few critical of post-genocide political governance and point out dictatorship, violations of human rights, inequalities and poverty in rural areas, injustice and the collective victimisation of the majority Hutu population (Reyntjens, 2004, 2013). This paper belongs to the second view and briefly focuses on the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state, its extraterritorial military operations and poor relations. We later show how these have impacted on refugee reception and protection in Rwanda. We start with the authoritarian nature of Rwanda.

2.1 Rwanda as an authoritarian state

Although Rwanda has made significant achievements in bureaucratic/technocratic governance with obvious achievements in socio-economic indicators (health, education), there is scholarly consensus on the fact that political governance is deeply flawed (Straus & Waldorf, 2011; Longman, 2011; Reyntjens, 2013, 2015; Thomson, 2018). Post-genocide Rwanda has made a transition from one type of authoritarian regime to another (Longman, 2011; Reyntjens, 2013; Thomson, 2018). The RPF regime has "systematically intimidated, co-opted and suppressed civil society, so that Rwanda today lacks independent social organisations capable of articulating most public interests." (Longman, 2011: 26-27). The civil society is under the control of the regime

(Reyntjens, 2004). Thomson (2018) argues that civil society, churches, mosques, human rights organisations etcetera are coerced. The RPF's view was that "civil society was not a counterweight to government, nor would it influence policy outcomes. Rather, civil society was conceived to act as the development branch of the government." (Thomson, 2018: 134). The RPF does not envisage a critical and confrontation role of the civil society (ibid). There is a '24/20 rule' in Rwanda. "You say something wrong and you get 24 hours to leave the country with 20 kilos worth of stuff." (ibid: 185). The hostile political environment seriously undermines the efforts of organisations and agencies working for refugees and asylum seekers.

Rwanda violates rights at home and abroad (Reyntjens, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2023). Journalists, bloggers, youtubers, musicians, writers and ordinary citizens critical of the government are attacked, detained, kidnapped, killed, tortured, or face forced disappearances. You speak politics and criticise the government at your own peril (Thomson, 2018). There are limitations on rights-freedom of speech, expression, assembly, association, restrictions of the civil society & free media. In short, all the rights are restricted and violated in Rwanda (US Department of State, 2023, 2022, 2021). As shown later, human rights violations affect refugees and asylum seekers as well.

There is consensus among scholars, civil society, government agencies and international organisations that Rwanda is an authoritarian state with a track record of repression and gross human rights violations (Reyntjens, 2004, 2013, 2015, 2022, 2023; Longman, 2011; Waldorf, 2011; Thomson, 2018; Freedom House 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024; US Department of State, 2023). The trend of human rights violations in Rwanda has either remained the same with little improvement or gotten worse over the years according to the reports on human rights (Freedom House, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024; US Department of State, 2023). For example, in the Freedom House index (2024), Rwanda scored 21/100; with a "political rights" score of 7/40 and a "civil liberties" score of 14/60 and it is ranked "not free."

2.2 Rwanda's extraterritorial military operations

Rwanda has after the genocide developed into a regional powerhouse by invading the DRC twice in the 1990s and supported proxy rebel groups (Reyntjens, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2020 & 2022). Rwanda is a small and poor country but it has been able to control the DRC militarily, politically and economically (Reyntjens, 2013). Rwanda's intervention in the DRC has been driven by security concerns, economic interests, ethnic solidarity and (selective) humanitarian concerns etcetera (Reyntjens, 2009). In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide that saw the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and the Interahamwe flee to the DRC (export of Rwanda's civil war), Rwanda has intervened a number of times. In 2000, the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR) Hutu rebel group was formed opposed to the Rwandan Tutsi dominated regime. Rwanda considers the FDLR a security threat and accuses it of targeting the Congolese Tutsi (Kibasomba & Barega, 2011). Rwanda has always accused the DRC of supporting the FDLR (Reyntjens, 2009).

Rwanda (partly out of ethnic solidarity) supports the Congolese Tutsi (the Banyamulenge) - Laurent Nkunda's Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) and later the M23 (Reyntjens, 2009, 2020, 2023). The M23 has destabilised the DRC and in early 2025, the group took control of parts of North and South Kivu including the provincial capitals of Goma and Bukavu. Rwanda denies supporting the M23 but reports by the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, intelligence, and former Rwandan Army officials have confirmed its involvement (UNSC, 2022; UNSC, 2023; UNSC, 2024). The M23 fighting has led to massive loss of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of Congolese to Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda and inside the DRC.

On the other hand, Rwanda's extraterritorial military operations extend to Burundi too. The two countries have supported each other's armed groups (Reyntjens, 2023). Burundi accuses Rwanda of supporting the RED-Tabara rebels operating in the DRC (ibid). In 2015, Burundi accused Rwanda of supporting the (failed) 2015 coup and hosting the coup leaders (Kebede, 2021; Ndayisaba, 2020). Rwanda has always accused Burundi of supporting the FDLR and the DRC army, it considers her enemies (Reyntjens, 2009, 2020, 2023). Rwanda's military operations against the

DRC and Burundi have operated under the logic that “an enemy of my enemy is my friend”, “a friend of my enemy is my enemy” and “an enemy of my friend is my enemy.”

2.3 Rwanda’s poor bilateral relations

Rwanda does not enjoy good relations with neighbouring countries and beyond. Rwanda’s relations with neighbours are either hostile or ambiguous partly related to its violent history, destabilising role and regional powerhouse position (Reyntjens, 2009, 2013). We will concentrate on DRC and Burundi since Rwanda hosts tens of thousands of their refugees. The relations with the DRC remain hostile due to its support for M23 (Reyntjens, 2020, 2022, 2023). By early 2025, with M23 renewed fighting and taking over territory, the DRC severed diplomatic relations and closed Rwanda’s embassy in Kinshasa (France 24, 2025; Aljazeera, 2025). As stated above, the two countries accuse each other of engaging in hostile activities. While the DRC accuses Rwanda of supporting the M23, Rwanda says the DRC supports the FDLR. These suspicions, accusations and hostile activities have greatly undermined bilateral relations between the two neighbours.

On the side of Burundi, Reyntjens (2020: 756) argues that, “As relations between Rwanda and Burundi have never been really cordial since independence, with Rwanda being dominated by Hutu élites and Burundi by Tutsi élites until the mid-1990s, these developments have been path dependent. However, the situation has considerably deteriorated by inverse critical junctures that occurred at about the same time in both countries, when Rwanda became dominated by assertive Tutsi rulers and Burundi by Hutu rulers, thus injecting a great deal of uncertainty in relations.” This observation summarises the historical context of relations between the two neighbours using the path dependence and critical junctures analytical frameworks.

Furthermore, Rwanda-Burundi relations have been frosty due to their differences in managing ethnicity (ibid: 756). It is further argued that “In particular, Rwanda – which practises a de-ethnicisation policy since the RPF came to power– resents Burundi’s choice of institutionalising ethnicity which it considers an ‘anti-model’.” (ibid: 756). On the other hand, the two countries have traded accusations of supporting hostile groups with Rwanda suspecting Burundi of supporting the FDLR and the latter accusing the former of providing support to the RED-Tabara rebels (Reyntjens, 2023, 2020). As earlier mentioned, in 2015, the relations worsened when

Burundi accused Rwanda of supporting the coup (Reyntjens, 2020). The coup leaders settled in Rwanda and this was seen by Burundi as a hostile act of adding insult to injury (Kebede, 2021; Ndayisaba, 2020). Since then, Burundi has from time to time closed and later reopened the common border, a sign of fluctuating but largely frosty relations.

The ambiguous and frosty relations between Rwanda and her neighbours (DRC and Burundi) has had implications on refugees on its territory. Refugees have been caught in the middle of the diplomatic tensions. The refugees and asylum seekers have either been recruited into non-state groups as part of the military strategy, expelled due to suspicions of espionage or threatened with forced return in Rwanda's diplomatic and political chessboard.

3. Brief history of refugees in Rwanda

Rwanda has been a host to refugees for several decades. The refugees have come mainly from her neighbours: DRC and Burundi affected by conflicts since independence. The conflicts in the DRC since the mid-1990s have displaced tens of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers onto the Rwandan soil. Burundi equally has been a source of refugees hosted by Rwanda till today. In addition, Rwanda hosts evacuees from Libya under the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), established in September 2019 by the UNHCR and African Union (AU). Its aim is to temporarily host refugees and asylum-seekers who have undertaken voluntary evacuation from Libya while solutions are found (UNHCR, 2025). In 2022, Rwanda signed the Migration and Economic Development Partnership agreement to receive, process and host asylum seekers and refugees from the United Kingdom (UK). However, the courts (Court of Appeal and Supreme Court) in the UK nullified this agreement. The Labour government that won elections in July 2024 canceled the agreement. Israel has also sent refugees and asylum seekers to Rwanda. Denmark had similar plans but this never materialised. Rwanda has also been a producer of refugees since its independence, but discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this article. The refugee influx meant that Rwanda had to enact legislation to manage them.

4. Methodology

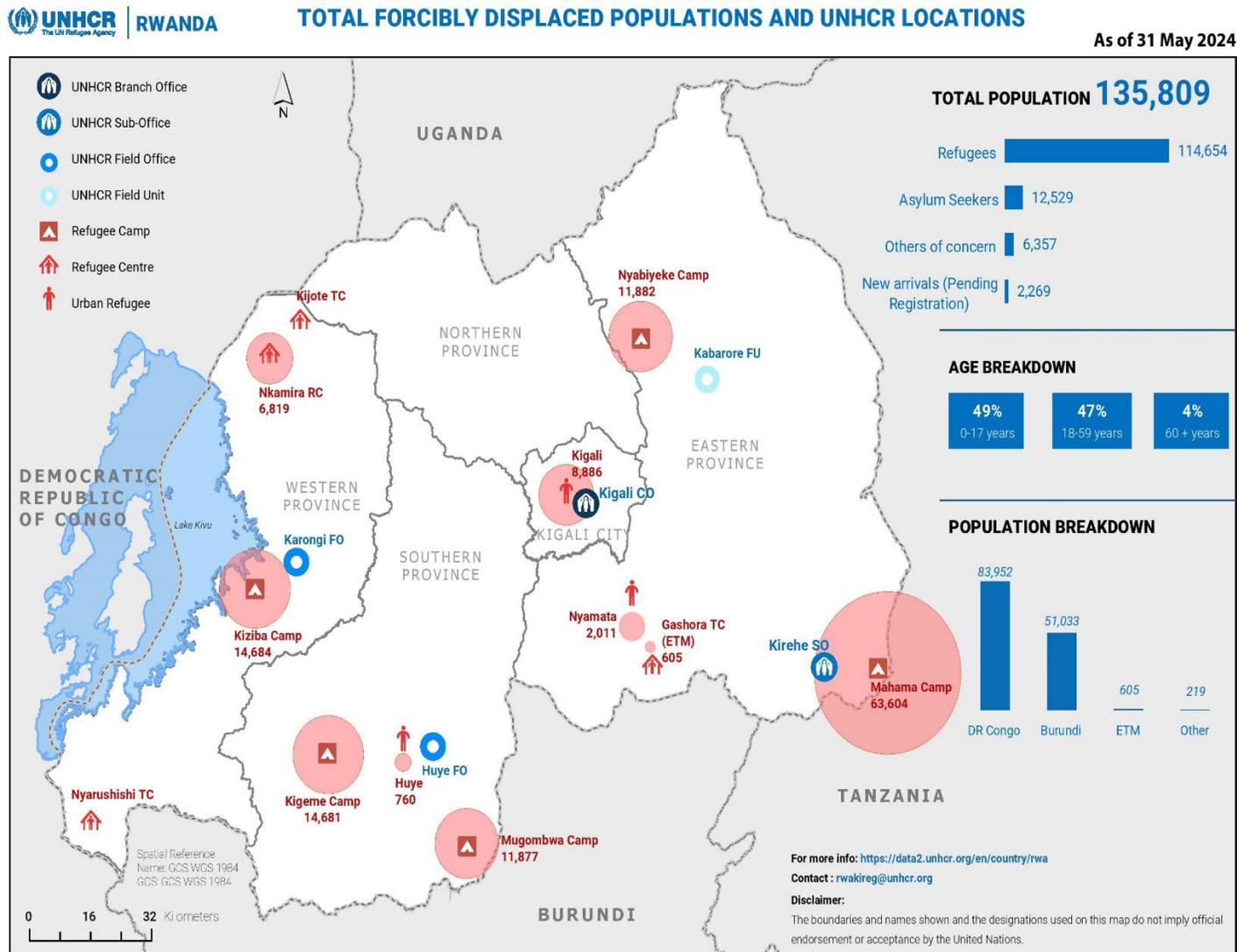
Qualitative approach was adopted for this study in both data collection and analysis. The study aimed at gaining a qualitative in-depth understanding of Rwanda's 2014 Law relating to refugees- both in theory and practice using the different perspectives existing in the literature. This article is based on review of relevant literature/desk-based study (Alvesson & Skölberg, 2007: 21; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 121). The literature on politics in post-genocide Rwanda specifically looked at the Rwandan authoritarian state, Regional politics, Rwanda's role in Africa's Great Lakes region, Rwanda and its neighbours and Rwanda's extraterritorial military operations.

The literature used in this paper was generated following a detailed search using the search engines on the online libraries of Mbarara University of Science and Technology and the University of Antwerp, both institutions where the author works. This search generated published peer reviewed articles and published books from social science databases and journals that the university has affiliations to. Literature was also retrieved from UNHCR websites which contain a variety of publications on the subject of refugees, refugee law and rights. Grey literature, including reports from organisations in the field of refugees, government reports and documents especially by the Rwandan government and other policy reports and unpublished works, also formed part of the literature used in this article. This literature from the variety of sources helped to triangulate discussions on Rwanda's 2014 Law both in theory and practice, and themes analysed in this paper, including the politics in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, and refugee protection and management. This range of literature also helps to problematise the research gap and Rwanda's 2014 law by analysing the discrepancy between theory and reality and the factors behind it.

In terms of analysis of data, the study used descriptive and analytical techniques. Therefore, the research was based on systematic analysis of content of documentation. The data collected was subjected to textual and content analysis (Creswell, 2009). The documents were subjected to the four major questions: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Scott, 1990 cited by Payne & Payne, 2004). The analysis involved subjecting documents to external and internal criticisms. External criticism aimed to discover whether a document was both genuine and

authentic. Internal criticism was about subjecting the contents of documents to rigorous analysis and interpretation. The author ignored and left out reports that only touched the topic superficially or just mentioned it, but instead focused on the publications and documents with substantial discussions on the subject under study (Opono & Ahimbisibwe, 2024). The author also considered literature that was more focused on the issues of conflicts and displacement in the Africa's Great Lakes region, refugee legislation, reception and protection in Rwanda.

Figure 1: Main refugee camps in Rwanda



Source: UNHCR (2024a). Rwanda: Map showing the location of refugees and asylum seekers, May, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109371>, accessed on 3rd March 2025.

5. The enactment of the 2014 Law Relating to Refugees

As of end of May 2024, Rwanda hosted more than 135,000 refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced persons. The population comprises of 83,952 (61.8 %) refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC, 51,033 (37.6%) from Burundi, 545 other nationalities and 340 from Eritrea (UNHCR, 2024a). Out of the total population, 91 % live in camp locations (Kigeme, Kiziba,

Mugombwa, Nyabiheke and Mahama as well as the ETM Centre in Gashora sector, Bugesera district. In addition, while the refugee situation in Rwanda has largely been a protracted one, increasing instability in Eastern DRC during the latter part of 2022, 2023 and beyond has forced people to flee across the border into Rwanda (ibid).

Rwanda enacted the 2001 Law Relating to Refugees (hereafter the 2001 Law) in line with the Constitution of June 10th 1991 and the 1993 Arusha Peace Accord. This was the first law dealing with refugees and asylum seekers on its soil. The 2001 Law makes reference to the fact that Rwanda is a signatory to the 1951 Convention, its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention. This law had some gaps that necessitated the enactment of the 2006 Law following the promulgation of the 2003 Constitution and the 2004 Law determining the organisation, functioning and jurisdiction of courts. Despite the enactment of the 2001 and 2006 laws that were generally progressive, they still had a number of gaps that required a new legislation that was fully consistent with regional and international instruments to which Rwanda was a party. The new law relating to refugees was adopted by parliament on 21st May 2014 and published in the Official Gazette number 26 of 30th June 2014.

It has been argued that the 2014 Law substantially reflects Rwanda's international and regional obligations under the relevant refugee and human rights instruments (Ahimbisibwe, 2024; Ahimbisibwe, 2023). It provides for a national legislation for the management and protection of refugees in line with the 1951 Convention, 1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention and human rights laws (ibid).

6. The gap between theory and reality

The Law is organized in seven chapters, the first with general provisions and including the purpose of the law and definition of terms. Chapter II covers the RSDC and its responsibilities. Chapter III deals with application for asylum and refugee status, the application, appeals, rejection, revocation and cessation of refugee status. Chapter IV focuses on the rights and obligations of refugees. Chapter V deals with refugee camps and their management. Chapter VI looks at durable solutions for refugees and lastly, Part VII contains final provisions. The next

section looks at four specific provisions of the Law and demonstrates how these have not been adhered to in practice.

6.1 Application for asylum and refugee status

Chapter III of the 2014 Law provides for application for asylum and refugee status specifically obtaining asylum¹, application for refugee status, appeal by a refugee status applicant, granting refugee status to refugees in mass influx situations, rejection of refugee status application, revocation and cessation of refugee status. Although the 2014 Law generally reflects regional and international legal instruments on the above aspects of application for asylum and refugee status, there are gaps in the way some provisions are implemented on ground. As will be explained later, the gaps are due to the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state.

First, Article 8 outlines the procedure for application of refugee status. Article 8(1) states that a person who applies for refugee status must be on the Rwandan territory. Article 8(2) adds that the person must report immediately to the local authority nearest to his/her point of entry. The local authority to whom the asylum seeker reports shall take him/her to the nearest immigration and emigration office within twelve (12) hours. This office shall register the asylum seeker within twenty four (24) hours from his/her arrival.

Article 8 further states that “the department in charge of immigration and emigration known as Directorate in charge of immigration and emigration (DGIE) shall review the case of the asylum seeker and grant to him/her a temporary residence permit valid for three (3) months.” Furthermore, “the department in charge of immigration and emigration shall submit the file of refugee status applicant to the Refugee Status Determination Committee (RSDC) within fifteen (15) days.”

On the contrary, the DGIE (a sub-division of National Intelligence and Security Service-NISS) summarily rejects asylum claims, including at Rwanda’s borders (UNHCR, 2024b: 14; Asylos, 2022). UNHCR attests to the expulsion of asylum seekers at Kigali airport and it is very possible that there are similar incidents elsewhere that UNHCR was not aware of (UNHCR, 2024b: 14). It

¹ Article 28 of the 2003 Rwandan Constitution (as amended in 2015) recognises the right to seek asylum.

is reported that “in the period from 2020 to 2022, UNHCR has identified a range of instances of ‘summary rejections’ by the DGIE.” (UNHCR, 2024b: 15).

In addition, “Where the summarily rejected asylum seeker lacks any permission to remain, the DGIE has also declined to issue a temporary residence permit, rendering these individuals liable to detention and expulsion. In practice there is no recourse from a DGIE rejection.” (ibid). In short, UNHCR’s view is that “the DGIE practice of denying these asylum seekers access to the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure placed them at serious risk of refoulement” (UNHCR, 2024b: 168).

Also, placing the DGIE, an agency under the NISS as a gatekeeper to Rwanda’s asylum system creates risks for asylum seekers. Rwanda’s involvement in extraterritorial military operations (for example supporting armed groups like M23) creates risks for asylum seekers in a region with deep ethnic conflicts and alliances within and across borders. There is also a risk of DGIE’s prioritisation of Rwanda’s national interests like security and foreign policy at the expense of refugee protection.

Furthermore, gaps exist in the way the RDSC handled asylum cases. There were reports of RDSC’s irregular meetings, limited capacity and knowledge of refugee law, inexperience of members, limited manpower, high turnover of members, no or limited access to lawyers and interpreters for asylum seekers to mention but a few (UNHCR, 2020, 2024b).

In addition, the RSDC still has a number of gaps in its operations. One of the gaps is lack of a close working relationship with UNHCR. It has been reported that “UNHCR does not have a presence at Kigali airport or Rwanda’s official borders” (UNHCR, 2024b: 25). The asylum seekers are also not informed of their right to access UNHCR or how to do so (ibid). The Government of Rwanda (GoR) does not systematically inform UNHCR of persons seeking asylum (Asylos, 2022; UNHCR, 2024b). Despite requests to attend the RSDC meetings as an observer since 2019, it was invited only once to attend RSDC meetings (ibid). As noted above, the GoR does not want to see a supervisory role of UNHCR (ibid). This is in line with Easton-Calabria’s (2022) observation that “Rwanda is a very politically restricted country. Constraints on political advocacy and freedom of

speech affect citizens, refugees, and assistance agencies – including UNHCR. They risk their activities being curtailed if they denounce the treatment of refugees.”

As a UN refugee agency, the UNHCR is highly experienced with technical expertise in matters of refugee protection and rights around the world. The RSDC’s reluctance to engage the UNHCR in refugee status determination procedures and processes is questionable and suspicious. It raises questions on Rwanda’s commitment to the implementation of refugee protection and rights. It has also been observed that the basis of RSDC decisions (and also DGIE) (particularly rejection) are not clearly explained to asylum seekers (Asylos, 2022; UNHCR, 2020; UNHCR, 2024b).

Moreover, Rwanda’s rejection of asylum claims was also a concern (Walsh, 2024; Asylos, 2022; UNHCR, 2024b). It is not clear why there was this rejection. But it is possible that Rwanda did not consider some as genuine asylum seekers. In other cases, Rwanda prioritised friendly relations (with countries of origin) at the expense of rights of asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2024b). UNHCR argues that some asylum seekers have been rejected at Kigali airport because GoR considered them ‘deceitful travelers’ and was ‘taking appropriate measures against them’ (Asylos, 2022; UNHCR, 2024b: 26).

Relatedly, deported asylum seekers (under a secretive deal between Israel, Rwanda and Uganda to receive African asylum seekers mostly from Sudan and Eritrea between 2014 and 2017) faced challenges of asylum applications in Rwanda. According to reports, although Israel promised them assistance to apply for asylum, remain and work in Rwanda, the reality on ground was different (International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI, 2015; UNHCR, 2024b). The Rwandan authorities clandestinely took them across the border into Uganda, they were not allowed to make asylum claims, threatened with deportation by unknown agents and scary overnight visits from unknown agents at their accommodation making them afraid to move around and as a result some disappeared (IRRI, 2015; UNHCR, 2024b). Many opted to return to Europe using dangerous channels (Reyntjens, 2022; Shoham, Bolzman & Birger, 2018; The Guardian, 2022, BBC World Service, 2022).

Another gap in Rwanda’s asylum system is the appeal process. According to Article 11, there is a provision for appeal by a refugee status applicant. It states that “a person not satisfied with the

decision of the RSDC may appeal to the Minister (Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA) within a period of thirty (30) days from the date he/she was notified of the decision". The Minister has a period of one (1) month to decide on the appeal.

However, the provision that appeals should be made to the Minister in charge of refugees raises questions as to the independence of the appeal process. Appealing to the Minister who is part of the RSDC that rejected one's application in the first attempt does not guarantee a fair and independent process (UNHCR, 2015; Ahimbisibwe, 2024). It is possible that the Minister will come to the same decision of the RSDC- rejecting the appeal. A UNHCR report raised this challenge. Thus, "the practice of appeal decisions being taken by the Minister of Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA) poses questions as to the independence of the appeal process and could further result in bottlenecks once a larger number of applications needs to be processed (UNHCR, 2020: 4-5). In fact, looking at the statistics of the appeals at the MINEMA, it is clear that there is a high number of rejections by the Minister. Thus: "From 2022 to November 2023, a total of 125 appeals were made to the Minister. Out of these, 104 were rejected and 21 accepted" (UK Home Office, 2023: 21).

Although in 2018 GoR enacted the Law Determining the Jurisdiction of Courts which sets out the right of appeal to the High Court,² the process is unclear and not known by the asylum seekers (Asylos, 2022; UNHCR, 2024b; Ahimbisibwe, 2024). Rwanda's asylum procedure does not permit lawyers to be present at DGIE and RSDC interviews and at appeal to the Minister. Lawyers don't make oral submissions at DGIE, RSDC or MINEMA stages, meaning that there is no hearing (Asylos, 2022; UNHCR, 2024b). GoR appears to agree that lawyers are not allowed at the above named levels (UK Home Office, 2022). Although GoR later contradicted itself that lawyers attend the DGIE, RSDC and MINEMA interviews, "the inconsistency appears only to be explicable on the basis that the GoR communication is aspirational while the GoR's earlier statements describe the situation as it presently exists." (UNHCR, 2024b: 17). It has been reported that "There is already an acute shortfall of lawyers who provide assistance on the Rwandan RSD process (with only one

² Article 47 states that "The High Court also adjudicates cases relating to the applications for asylum."

legal officer and one lawyer properly trained and currently available to work on the Rwandan RSD process.” (ibid). Also, the GoR noted that there were arrangements for advocates and legal officers to represent asylum seekers, but this was in the context of the appeals at the High Court which the UNHCR was not aware of (ibid). Moreover, it was not clear whether such services were free or at the asylum seekers’ cost. In any case, few would manage the cost. Even for organisations that would offer pro bono services, there was concern that they lacked the sufficient capacity and expertise (ibid). Besides, NGOs, civil society and organisations face restrictions and their operations are highly controlled by the regime (Reyntjens, 2023; Thomson, 2018; Longman, 2011).

Despite the refugees’ right of appeal in the High Court, there is concern that courts are not independent in Rwanda. The Freedom House report points out this reality: “Despite constitutional provisions that declare its independence, the Rwandan judiciary lacks autonomy from the executive in practice. Top judicial officials are appointed by the president and confirmed by the RPF-dominated Senate. Judges rarely rule against the government in politically sensitive cases. Judges who have asserted their independence in sensitive cases have seen their careers end suddenly with no prospect of being considered for employment, prompting others to toe the government line.” (Freedom House, 2025). This assessment has been consistent in Freedom House reports of 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018 and the previous years. Similar observations have been made by scholars, civil society and (inter) national agencies (Reyntjens, 2013; Thomson, 2018; Amnesty International, 2024, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2025, 2024; US Department of State, 2023, 2022; International Federation for Human Rights, 2024, 2023) among others. There is a risk that the refugees’ right of appeal in the High Court may be compromised due to state interference.

UK Courts have pointed out the gaps in Rwanda’s asylum system. The Court of Appeal in the R (AAA) and others v The Secretary of State for the Home Department [2023] EWCA Civ 745 ruled that Rwanda’s refugee determination system is not sufficiently safe for asylum seekers to be deported there. By a majority, the Court noted that there is a ‘substantial ground for believing that there is a real risk that persons sent to Rwanda will be returned to their home countries

where they faced persecution or other inhumane treatment, when, in fact, they have a good claim for asylum.’ It also found that Rwanda was not a ‘safe third country’.

In the R (on the application of AAA (Syria) and others) v SSHD [2023] UKSC 42 case, the Supreme Court agreed with the Court of Appeal. The court found Rwanda does not have the practical ability to properly determine asylum claims and protect people from refoulement (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The Supreme Court was guided by the UNHCR evidence that pointed out gaps in Rwanda’s asylum system; the potential lack of independence of the judiciary and lawyers and a high rejection rate for asylum seekers from conflict affected Countries-Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen³ (UNHCR, 2024b).

6.2 Civilian and humanitarian character of asylum

Article 13 of the 2014 Law provides for the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum. Article 2 of the 2016 Ministerial Instructions determining the management of refugees and refugee camps prohibits refugees from engaging in military trainings and other military related activities. These clauses are aimed at safeguarding refugees from military activities and not jeopardize their security in a volatile Great Lakes region of Africa. Despite the provisions of the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, Rwanda has armed refugees in its military operations with neighbouring countries. For example, there are reports of the recruitment, training and arming of Burundian refugees by the Rwandan army (UNSC, 2024; Reyntjens, 2022; BBC, 2016; VOA, 2015; UNHCR, 2016; Kitenge, 2016; Refugees International, 2015).

According to Refugees International (2015), there was recruitment of Burundian refugees in Mahama camp in Rwanda with the intention of destabilising Burundi. Some humanitarian officials talked of training inside Nyungwe Forest National Park in southwest Rwanda (ibid). The report further notes that “Between May 2015 and early December 2015, at least 14 groups of refugees resident in Mahama – comprising at least 50 individuals – separately and independently raised concerns about recruitment to international and Rwandan officials.” (ibid: 3). In addition,

³ Rwanda’s view is that these asylum seekers ought to have applied for asylum in the neighbouring countries (UNHCR, 2024b).

“at least 30 additional Burundians who had been refugees in Mahama were also apprehended in the DRC and provided information about recruitment to international officials.”(ibid). Some of the refugees talked of using registration cards of their colleagues that had gone for military training (ibid).

Also, the UN Group of Experts noted that the M23 have recruited Congolese refugees including children in refugee camps in Rwanda and Uganda (UNSC, 2024; UNSC, 2023, paras. 146–149). According to “intelligence sources, ex-RDF members and five children recruited from refugee camps confirmed that recruitment activities were going on in nearly all refugee camps in Rwanda, notably in Mahama, Gisagara, Kizimba and Gihembe” (UNSC, 2024). It is further reported that the Rwandan army was directly involved in recruiting for M23. Thus: “Recruitment was conducted predominantly through false promises of remuneration or employment by Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) officers (UNSC, 2024, para.104). Also, young children aged 12 had been recruited from schools in refugee camps and taken to Musanze (former Ruhengeri) in Rwanda. From there the soldiers led them on foot across the border into Tchanzu in the DRC for military training (ibid).

As stated above, the recruitment of Burundian and Congolese refugees into non-state armed groups happened in the context of the poor relations between Rwanda and her two neighbours Burundi and DRC (Reyntjens, 2020, 2022; Ndikumagenge, 2024). Burundi and Rwanda accuse each other of supporting hostile groups. Rwanda has long suspected Burundi of supporting the FDLR rebels on ethnic grounds. The FDLR is linked to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. On the other hand, the Burundian government accused Rwanda of supporting rebels to overthrow the Bujumbura regime (Reyntjens, 2020; UNSC, 2024). In fact, Burundi openly accused Rwanda of planning and supervising the 13th May 2015 coup d'état (The Citizen, 2018; Muhame, 2018). Matters became worse when Rwanda hosted the coup leaders who had fled Burundi (BBC, 2015). Burundi's president Nkurunziza at the time wrote to Uganda's president Museveni as chair of the East African Community (EAC) accusing Rwanda of aggression and supporting the failed coup d'état,(The Citizen, 2018; Muhame, 2018).

Furthermore, we earlier stated that Rwanda's recruitment of Burundian and Congolese refugees into rebel activities refugees is part of its extraterritorial military operations. As a regional power house, Rwanda supports armed groups against her neighbours under the logic of 'an enemy of my enemy is my friend' (Reyntjens, 2009). Rwanda has been accused of supporting Burundi's RED-Tabara rebels⁴ operating in Eastern DRC (UNSC, 2024; Hajayandi, 2024; Voice of America (VOA), 2024; Musambi, 2024; Ndikumagenge, 2024). Burundi closed the border with Rwanda in 2015, reopened it in 2022 and closed it again in January 2024. Also, Burundi has deployed its army on the side of the DRC and warned Rwanda of destabilising the region.

On the other hand, Rwanda has destabilised the DRC by supporting the M23 rebels that took over Goma in 2012 and 2025, Bukavu and other areas in early 2025. Rwanda accuses the DRC of supporting the FDLR rebels and other armed groups. The Congolese accusations against Rwanda have been confirmed by the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, in public reports published on 14 June 2022 and 4 June 2024, and found that Rwanda and Uganda had provided rear bases and other support to the M23 (UNSC, 2022; UNSC, 2024).

6.3 Refugee rights

Article 18 of the 2014 Law provides for rights of refugees as provided for by international instruments. Rwanda ratified the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention on Refugees and other international human rights instruments. However, a close scrutiny of Rwanda's practice reveals cases of violations of refugee rights. For example, in 2018 around 700 Congolese refugees residing in Kiziba camp in Rwanda organized a march to Karongi UNHCR field offices (UNHCR, 2020). The refugees were protesting against a 25 percent reduction

⁴RED-Tabara first appeared in 2011 and became active in 2015 in the aftermath of a political crisis and failed coup by some military officers against Burundi's then president, Pierre Nkurunziza, who died in 2020. The Burundian government considers the group of being a terrorist movement and its members of being part of a failed coup attempt in 2015. The group claims to fight for a return to the rule of law, which it claims the current government has abandoned. However, its indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations are increasingly falling into the pattern of terror acts (Hajayandi, 2024).

in food rations. After two days, the Rwandan police fired live ammunition on refugees and killed 12 in Karongi and Kiziba refugee camp (ibid). Others were arrested, detained and tried.

According to the UNHCR (2020: 3-4),

“Between February and May 2018, 77 refugees, including three minors and three females, were arrested following this incident. They were charged with participating in illegal demonstrations (Art. 685 Penal Code), violence against public authorities (Art. 540 Penal Code), rebellion (Art. 530 Penal Code), disobeying enforcement of law (Art. 464 Penal Code). In total, 29 refugees were released: 2 of them after having already served their sentence of one year and six months, seven (including three minors) after the court suspended their penalty of two years and six months, one proven not guilty and 18 released with no charges.”

“Five refugees, including four identified as leaders of the refugee camp’s Executive Committee were charged with spreading false information with intent to create a hostile international opinion against the Rwandan state” (Art. 451 Penal Code), “inciting insurrection or trouble amongst the population (Art. 463 Penal Code). One refugee was sentenced to 15 years on 21 October 2018 for spreading false information with intent to create a hostile international opinion against Rwandan State (Art. 451 Penal Code); illegal demonstration or public gathering (Art. 685 Penal Code); inciting insurrection or trouble amongst the population (Art. 463 Penal Code). He is serving his sentence at Muhanga prison and has appealed, his date of the hearing has not been fixed yet (more than a year and a half later). The four refugees identified as leaders of the protest were charged with the same counts.”

In 2018, a report by the Rwandan National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) seemed to exonerate the police. It stated that “police responded to a ‘violent and organised attack’ and used force as a last resort.” (UNHCR, 2020: 4). However, Human Rights Watch’s investigation revealed that the refugees were unarmed and the police used excessive force (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The Commission’s report was not surprising given its close links to the government which has covered up government violations in the past (Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), 2023; Amnesty

International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019]. The government has not prosecuted the police personnel responsible for the killings and the refugees have been denied justice (ibid).

Furthermore, Rwanda targets its nationals who are refugees abroad. Human Rights Watch (2023:61) “documented cases of kidnappings, attempted kidnappings, physical assaults, and beatings of Rwandan refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda, by Kinyarwanda speakers or people suspected of working for the Rwandan government.” Moreover, “the Rwandan government sought to use global police cooperation, including Interpol Red Notices, judicial mechanisms, and extradition requests to seek deportations of critics or dissidents back to Rwanda.”(ibid: 73). In addition, even their relatives in Rwanda had been “targets of arbitrary detention, torture, harassment, and restrictions on movements to pressure, punish, or silence their family members living abroad.” (ibid: 92).

The above cases illustrate the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state. Refugees (both at home and abroad) are victims of state repression. They are not free to express their dissatisfaction through peaceful protests, activism and freedom of speech. (UNHCR, 2024b; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Amnesty International, 2019). Rwandans are equally not free to express themselves through demonstrations (Reyntjens, 2013; Thomson, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2023, 2024; Amnesty International, 2023, 2024).

Rwanda’s poor record on refugee rights has been highlighted by UK courts. In the R (on the application of AAA (Syria) and others) v SSHD [2023] UKSC 42 case, the Supreme Court pointed out evidence of human rights violations (in Rwanda) including extrajudicial killings, extraterritorial rights violations including threats to Rwandans living in the UK, death in custody, enforced disappearances, torture, refoulement, restrictions on freedom of the media and civil and political rights. According to the Court, “there remain profound human rights concerns” (ibid, para.76).

As shown above, the right to asylum is at stake due to flaws in Rwanda’s asylum system. There were gaps in the handling of asylum claims by its agencies, namely the DGIE, RSDC, MINEMA and the High Court. A number of asylum seekers have been summarily expelled at Kigali airport or border points by the DGIE. In other cases, the DGIE, RSDC or MINEMA have rejected asylum claims or appeals without a fair hearing or representation by lawyers. The appeals procedure at the High

Court is not well known, not easily accessed and courts lack independence [UNHCR, 2024b; UNHCR, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024).

6.4 The principle of non-refoulement

Article 21 of the 2014 Law provides for the principle of non-refoulement. This principle notes that a refugee should not be sent to a country where his/her life is in danger or he/she has well-founded fear of persecution. Despite the provision for this principle and its emphasis of voluntary repatriation, there are cases which show that Rwanda has undermined it in practice. According to reports, around May and June 2016, Rwanda expelled around 1700 Burundian refugees and asylum seekers accusing some of them of espionage (Reuters, 2016; Africa News, 2016). A local government official from Bugabira district near the border with Burundi where the incident occurred, confirmed the evictions (Reuters, 2016; Africa News, 2016). The majority of those sent back to Burundi were living in the Southern Province, which shares a border with the northern part of Burundi (Relief web, 2016).

Rwanda accused the Burundians of staying in the country illegally (Relief web, 2016). A government spokesperson argued that “We have not expelled any refugees. The said people who were sent back to Burundi were not refugees but those who were illegally entering or living in Rwanda without proper documents.” (Relief web, 2016; The Citizen, 2016). He added that “This exercise was conducted by local government authorities. None of the people who were asked to go back and attain proper documentation had declared themselves as refugees.” (The Citizen, 2016; Reuters, 2016). On the side of Burundi, a government official argued noted that the refugees were given two options: going to refugee camps or returning back to Burundi. Those who refused to go to the refugee camps were expelled and stripped of their property (Aljazeera, 2016).

Amidst the expulsions, Rwanda threatened to relocate around 70,000 Burundian refugees to other countries (BBC, 2016; Aljazeera, 2016). Rwanda’s announcement came days after it was accused of destabilising Burundi by arming its refugees in Mahama camp (Aljazeera, 2016; Reuters, 2016 & BBC, 2016). According to Rwanda’s foreign affairs minister (at the time), Louise Mushikiwabo, the decision to relocate the refugees was due to national security risks. Thus: “the long-term presence of refugees so close to their country of origin carries considerable risks for all involved” (Aljazeera,

2016; BBC, 2016). She further argued that "the growing risks to our national security from the Burundian impasse and misunderstandings in our foreign relations are unacceptable" (ibid). Rwanda later dropped the idea and assured the UNHCR that it would not "forcibly expel Burundian refugees" (UNHCR, 2016). UNHCR asked the government to state publicly that it would not expel Burundian refugees so as to avoid panic among refugees in Rwanda (ibid).

On the other hand, Rwanda's crackdown on Burundians was in response to the expulsion of thousands of Rwandans by Burundi since April 2015. In fact, Rwandans in Burundi complained of harassment by the security operatives which forced hundreds, mainly business people to return to Rwanda (BBC, 2016; Iwacu English News, 2016).

The tit for tat harassment of each other's nationals was a sign of sour relations between the two countries. Burundi accused Rwanda of fueling the political crisis caused by Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a third term contrary to Burundi's constitution (Kebede (2021; Ndayisaba, 2020). This was opposed by Burundians who staged protests. Burundi also accused Rwanda of supporting the coup attempt in 2015 (Aljazeera, 2016; BBC, 2016; Muhame, 2018). Although Rwanda denied Burundi's accusation, the decision to settle the coup leader Godefroid Niyombare along with many opposition leaders worsened the already frosty relations (Kebede, 2021; Ndayisaba, 2020).

It is possible that Rwanda's threats to expel Burundian refugees was a deflection of the criticisms to its hostile stance towards Burundi. Also, Rwanda's actions were perhaps a reaction to alleged Burundi's support to FDLR rebels. As a result, the Burundian refugees (and Rwandan nationals in Burundi) were caught in the middle of rivalries and conflict between the two countries. As the saying goes, "when two elephants fight, the grass suffers."

The Congolese refugees are another example of such threats of expulsion. In January 2023, Rwanda threatened to expel Congolese refugees after it was accused of supporting the M23 rebels in DRC. Rwanda's president, Kagame warned that "he would not let Rwanda be a 'dumping ground' for refugees when the international community continues to blame him for the violence in eastern DR Congo" (The East African, 2023; The Standard, 2023; Mutagoma & Bagiruwubusa, 2023; Aljazeera, 2023). He further argued that "We cannot keep being host to refugees, for which we are later on held accountable in some way" (Amnesty International, 2023; The East African, 2023;

Aljazeera, 2023). Kagame added that “since the international community appears to have failed to hold the DR Congo government to account, his country should not continue to carry the burden and be insulted and abused every day about it” (The East African, 2023; Aljazeera, 2023). He further argued that “So, either you carry the refugees from here and take them wherever you want, or they go back to Congo, or you protect them there. I have heard you will protect them against their own government, and from the mercenaries.” (The East African, 2023).

However, the Rwandan government did not expel the refugees. According to its spokesperson, Yolande Makolo, “Rwanda has no intention to expel or ban refugees.” (The East African, 2023; Aljazeera, 2023; Isilow & Tasamba, 2023; Oluka, 2023). She instead blamed the media for “misrepresenting” Kagame’s remarks. She noted that: “We always welcome people fleeing insecurity, persecution and violence. We are asking for the international community to take responsibility for finding a lasting solution for this forgotten group of refugees from the DRC...” (The East African, 2023; Aljazeera, 2023).

Rwanda’s threat to expel Congolese refugees is another example of its attempt to deflect attention on its military support to the M23 and the destabilisation of the DRC (Mudge, 2023; Africa News, 2023). The UN Group of Experts highlighted Rwanda’s support to the M23 that is responsible for insecurity in the DRC (UNSC, 2024; UNSC, 2023; UNSC, 2022). Also, the threat shows the extent to which Rwanda can play the refugee card to deflect criticism of its hostile activities in the DRC. In other words, the threat demonstrates Rwanda’s politicisation of refugee rights and protection to achieve political objectives (Human Rights Watch, 2024; Mudge, 2023; Africa News, 2023).

More still, courts have ruled that Rwanda undermines the principle of non-refoulement. The UK’s Court of Appeal in the R (AAA) and others v The Secretary of State for the Home Department [2023] EWCA Civ 745 found that there is a ‘substantial ground for believing that there is a real risk that persons sent to Rwanda will be returned to their home countries where they faced persecution or other inhumane treatment, when, in fact, they have a good claim for asylum.’ The Court argued

that sending anyone to Rwanda would constitute a breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)⁵. It also argued that Rwanda was not a 'safe third country'.

In the R (on the application of AAA (Syria) and others) v SSHD [2023] UKSC 42, the Supreme Court concurred with the Court of Appeal that Rwanda was not a safe third country for the UK government to send asylum seekers. In a unanimous judgment, "the Supreme Court ruled that "there were substantial grounds for believing that asylum seekers would face a real risk of ill-treatment by reason of refoulement in the event that they were removed to Rwanda" (para. 73). In other words, the Supreme Court noted that there is a risk of forced return of asylum seekers in Rwanda contrary to its international obligations under refugee and human rights law.

In its evidence to the Court, the UNHCR (intervener in the case) presented cases of refoulement of asylum seekers in Rwanda (UNHCR, 2024b). As earlier noted, between February 2021 to June 2022, there were cases of six individuals who sought asylum at Kigali airport but were summarily expelled (UNHCR, 2024b: 26). In other cases, "asylum seekers were told to leave Rwanda within twelve hours and threatened with imminent refoulement to their State of origin if they failed to comply and told that this was happening at the request of their country of origin. Others felt compelled to leave Rwanda and seek asylum elsewhere. In three more recent cases, individuals who were nationals of that same State were also required to leave Rwanda having claimed asylum. Those individuals were required by the DGIE to leave Rwanda within periods of a few days or taken to the border with Tanzania and required to depart." (UNHCR, 2024b: 26).

7. Conclusion

This article has argued that much as Rwanda's 2014 Law Relating to Refugees is generally progressive and meets international protection standards, there is a gap between law and practice. This paper has analysed this discrepancy by focusing on specific provisions of the law. Drawing on the scholarly literature on politics in post-genocide Rwanda, the implementation of the 2014 Law is affected by three interrelated factors: the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state, its extraterritorial military operations and its poor bilateral relations.

⁵ Article 3 states that: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

We have illustrated that Rwanda's asylum procedures and processes are not respected in practice. The DGIE is required to review asylum cases, grant temporary residence permits and transfer asylum application files to the RSDC. In practice, it summarily rejects asylum claims at Rwanda's borders and Kigali airport. There are cases of expulsion of asylum seekers by the DGIE. Also the DGIE is a threat to asylum seekers due to it being part of the NISS. We have shown the gaps of the RSDC that further complicates the asylum system. Although in theory refugees can appeal to the Minister and the High Court, in practice the appeals are rejected by the Minister and the High Court is not known or easily accessible by the asylum seekers. Due to the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state, the judiciary is not independent and judges rarely rule against the government in politically sensitive cases. Political advocacy for refugee rights by UNHCR and NGOs is restricted.

On the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, we have illustrated how Burundian and Congolese refugees have been recruited, trained and armed to join rebel activities (M23, RED-Tabara etcetera) by the Rwandan army to destabilise the countries of origin. Rwanda's actions relate to its extraterritorial military operations and poor relations with Burundi and DRC.

The 2014 Law provides for refugee rights as enshrined in international refugee and human rights instruments to which Rwanda is a signatory. However, refugee rights are denied in practice. The 2018 killing of 12 refugees and the imprisonment of others points to the gloomy picture of refugee rights in Rwanda. Although these cases are not common, refugees are not free to express their dissatisfaction through peaceful protests. This is a reality for Rwandan citizens (both at home and abroad) as well. Lastly, despite the provision for the principle of non-refoulement, there are cases which show that Rwanda has instead issued threats, expelled, deported and forced asylum seekers and refugees to return to home (other) countries. Rwanda does this either as a way of deflecting attention on its military (hostile) activities in countries of origin (Burundi and DRC) or as part of its poor relations with these countries.

The insights in this article have policy and methodological implications. From a policy perspective, the paper has shown that the politics of the country of asylum impacts on refugee protection and rights. In the case of Rwanda, the authoritarian nature of the state led to violation of refugee rights

(right to life, freedom of expression and opinion, right to peaceful assembly, right to a fair trial, right to asylum, right of appeal, freedom from expulsion and the principle of non-refoulement).

Rwanda is a country that violates rights at home and abroad. It violates the rights of its citizens, asylum seekers, refugees and foreign nationals. Asylum seekers and refugees come into a political context and this has implications on their protection and rights. Also, Rwanda's authoritarian nature affects the political advocacy of UNHCR and other agencies for refugee rights. They risk being curtailed if they denounce the treatment of refugees. In this context, they will choose to keep quiet, keep a low profile to be in 'good books' with state authorities and avoid jeopardising their operations.

Also, refugees have been entangled in Rwanda's extraterritorial military operations. The Burundian and Congolese refugees have been recruited into rebel groups supported by Rwanda. Refugees have also been victims of Rwanda's poor relations with their countries of origin exposing them to threats, expulsions, forced return and recruitment into armed rebellion. There is need to understand these political, diplomatic and military dynamics in countries of asylum and their overall impact on refugee protection. This can be used as a basis for making (or strengthening already existing) policies, frameworks and plans for refugee protection in asylum countries and regions. This will go a long way in securing peaceful, secure, non-military, humanitarian, and compassionate and human rights sensitive asylum systems.

From a methodological perspective, this study focused on Rwanda's implementation of the 2014 Law. There is need for future research on other African countries' refugee laws and their implementation taking into consideration the political, diplomatic and military dynamics. This is important especially in the volatile Great Lakes and Horn of Africa where armed conflicts and wars continue to generate asylum seekers and refugees. In a situation where countries of asylum remain at war with neighbours, in a context of ethnic conflicts, polarisation and alliances within and across borders and amidst hostile and ambiguous relations, it is important to interrogate the implications to the quality and quantity of asylum at national and regional levels. Such experiences can help us understand the plight of refugees and asylum seekers and also be used as lessons for other asylum countries and regions in the contemporary world.

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