



Malawi – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 24 February 2015

Malawi (Rwandans): Reports of Rwandans (or their businesses) being targeted or attacked in Malawi in 2010 or 2011. Reports of Rwandans fleeing Malawi in around 2010 and 2011 because of human rights abuses, discrimination and attacks by society and the authorities.

Reports of Rwandans being targeted or attacked in Malawi during the period 2010 -2011 were not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

Referring to an attack on a Rwandan refugee in Malawi in 2007 a report published by the Rwanda News Agency states:

“Malawi President Bingu Wa Mutharika has come under heavy criticism from Rwandan of opposition groups for apparently colluding with Kigali officials to crack down on opposition political asylum seekers, a local newspaper has reported. Last week on Monday, a Rwandan refugee in Malawi Dr Jean Marie Vianney Rwabukwisi was attacked at night by unknown assailants. The attack occurred barely four weeks after Mr. Kagame met Mr. Mutharika during the inauguration of a three kilometres Paul Kagame Road in the capital Lilongwe. The armed bandits are said to have fired several shots and rushed in Rwabukwisi’s house destroying several personal belongings but nobody was neither killed nor injured. The opposition alliance comprises of; the Rwandan Democratic Alliance, Resistance Forces for Democracy, Republican Rally for Democracy and other independent political leaders under the umbrella of UDF-Inkingi have alleged that armed under-cover government intelligence operatives from Rwanda are to blame, according to the Nyasa Times.”
(Rwanda News Agency (9 October 2007) *Malawi: Country Under Fire Over Attacks On Refugees – Reports*)

Although it does not specifically mention Malawi a Human Rights Watch report refers to attacks on Rwandan dissidents in neighbouring counties as follows:

“In addition to the repression of critical voices inside Rwanda, dissidents and real or perceived critics outside the country—in neighboring Uganda and Kenya, as well as farther afield in South Africa and Europe—have been victims of attacks and threats.” (Human Rights Watch (28 January 2014) *Rwanda: Repression Across Borders*)

In a paragraph headed “Background on Attacks” this report states:

“The victims of the attacks abroad have tended to be political opponents or outspoken critics of the Rwandan government or President Kagame himself. Former RPF officials who have turned against President Kagame and

become opponents in exile have particularly been targets of attacks and threats. There are similarities between attacks in high-profile cases, for example, the assassinations of former Minister of Interior Seth Sendashonga in 1998 and former Head of External Intelligence Patrick Karegeya in 2014, and the attempted assassination of former army Chief of Staff Kayumba Nyamwasa in 2010, the former in Kenya, and the latter two in South Africa. A number of the victims had been granted refugee status in the country to which they had fled, in recognition of the risks they faced in Rwanda. The fact that even recognized refugees have fallen prey to such attacks has heightened fears among exiled Rwandans, who now believe that no one is out of reach.” (ibid)

A 2011 Agence France Presse report on the repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Malawi states:

“Aaron Sangala, Malawi’s internal affairs minister, said authorities from the two countries would draw up a road map for repatriating the refugees on voluntary basis. ‘We want to promote a “go, see and tell” policy,’ he said, adding that some of the refugees would be flown back to Rwanda to visit their homes and see the current conditions in the country. Under a 2009 agreement between Rwanda and United Nations refugee agency UNHCR, Rwandans who fled to Malawi will have refugee status until the end of this year. Those who want to remain will have to apply for temporary residency or citizenship.” (Agence France Presse (13 February 2011) *Rwanda minister urges refugees to come home*)

A Voice of America News report states:

“Government statistics show that Malawi currently hosts an estimated 14,000 refugees, who are mainly from Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia. Most of them are being kept at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp, which is located 45 kilometers from the capital, Lilongwe. The camp, however, has been an issue for Malawian small business operators as the refugees are also running businesses which compete against those operated by locals. Such businesses include tea rooms, hair dressing salons and barber shops. Efforts to stop refugees from operating business have been ignored.” (Voice of America News (1 December 2012) *Malawi President Considers Closing Refugee Camp*)

An IRIN News report on a UNHCR recommendation to invoke a “ceased circumstances” clause for Rwandan refugees, in a paragraph headed “Countries invoking the clause”, states:

“Although Malawi is among the countries said to be invoking the cessation clause, the process is still in its early stages. According to George Kuchio, UNCHR representative for Malawi, the first step of informing the 660 refugees covered by the clause of their right to apply for exemption has just been completed, and the government has yet to decide what options it will offer for local integration. ‘If there are people who still have compelling reasons for not returning, they’ll be given the opportunity to have their say,’ Kuchio told IRIN. However, the principal secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Besten Chisamile, was quoted in the local media as saying, ‘The situation in Rwanda stabilized long ago, and there is every reason for the remaining ones [refugees] to return to their home. We are

working with UNHCR on ensuring we repatriate them.’ Malawi is host to a further 500 Rwandan asylum seekers whose refugee status has yet to be determined but who are unlikely to be covered by the cessation clause.” (IRIN News (12 July 2013) *No consensus on implementation of cessation clause for Rwandan refugees*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

Agence France Presse (13 February 2011) *Rwanda minister urges refugees to come home*

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European Country of Origin Information Network

Human Rights Watch

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Google

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
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UNHCR Refworld
US Department of State