

# **The Pegasus Debacle and the Western Media's Obsession with Undermining Paul Kagame**

In the age of interconnectivity, the fear of privacy loss is understandable, but it's being weaponized by western media.

The Pegasus Project, an international journalistic initiative supported by Amnesty International, has brought salacious surveillance revelations back to the mediatic sphere. These allegations include that Rwanda placed 3500 people on a surveillance list, one of whom is Carine Rusesabagina, the daughter of a terrorist group sponsor and leader, Paul Rusesabagina. The Rwandan government has denied these allegations.

As far as I, a Rwandan living in Rwanda, is concerned, the criticisms of the Pegasus Project are really a non-issue. If anything, I find it irritating that Rwanda is forever expected to explain itself for supposedly emulating the west as far as preserving the safety of its people is concerned. However, it is essential to consider the underlying intentions of these mediatic attacks and to identify the pattern in both established and questionable journalistic outlets bandwagoning ageing, long-disproven anti-Rwanda narratives.

## **The Horse That Saved**

As far as Global North's media is concerned, it seems that Rwanda can do no right, least of all when attempting to protect its citizens. The tactics that aim to weaken the Rwandan order all revolve around legitimizing one narrative: the autocracy of the Kagame's government. As it pertains to the welfare of Rwandans, there are no contemplable angles for detractors to use besides misrepresenting the decisiveness of Rwanda's leadership as dictatorial. The commendable social

offerings and rapid economic growth of post-genocide Rwanda cannot be denied. Ironically, Rwanda's most passionate critics have received research funding and gained promotions writing articles that highlight Rwanda's advancement under President Kagame while, at once, refusing to attribute to him the due credit.

Westerners, including the International Cooperation Arena, have consistently “[Stressed] the Rwandan “miraculous” post-genocide recovery and the rapid progress that the country is experiencing,” according to [The Milan Institute for International Political Studies](#). The article also highlights many of Rwanda's feats under the Kagame leadership, such as its establishment as a technological hub in the East African region and its pursuit of self-sustainability through achieving the [Millennium Development Goals](#) with a variety of programmes, including, but not limited to, [the Nine-Year Basic Education, One Cow Per Family](#) and [the Community-based Education system](#). Empathy and even self-and communal love have guided the pursuit of these measures. These sentiments are, contrary to our depictions of Rwandans in western media as hateful tribalists ([a western projection](#)), at the core of Rwandan culture. Similarly, it is no coincidence that [reducing childbirth mortality rates has been a top priority of the Rwandan government](#); the maternal essence of Rwanda, particularly after the genocide that left countless mothers widowed, explains the inclination of Rwandans to nurture and protect human life at all cost.

Pegasus, ironically, is derived from a Greek mythological concept that very much aligns with the empathy-based desire to protect one's community that I have earlier argued to be a fundament of Rwandan and African culture. Pegasus was a winged horse, which was ridden by a brave-hearted Corinthian hero named Bellerophon to defeat a monstrous fire-breathing creature (among other noble feats). The Pegasus software is an Israeli counter-terrorism tool developed by the NSO cyber-arms

firm. It was designed to prevent the inferno of terroristic persecution, which Israel's population is familiar with overcoming, from ravaging vulnerable communities once more.

I see nothing wrong with that. The Rwandan government has made it clear that Pegasus is not a technology that it can currently afford. However, I whole-heartedly hope that the government will soon acquire or develop its own similar technology. I, as a Rwandan, would prefer that the state, upon which I rely for my welfare and safety, could choose what information to gather to protect these fundamental interests of mine and other Rwandans, rather than that choice being left to the neo-imperialist billionaires [selling every social media user's information to the highest \(and often, most ill-intended\) bidder](#), or [the US, alongside the UK, investing in the tapping of global communication fibre optic cables](#).

### **The Lies Meant to Kill**

The insinuations that the Rwandan leadership would misuse its power are disingenuous. It surmises that there are some forces – for example the US (whose intentions for funding [some of the most expensive](#) and comprehensive spyware on the planet were never questioned, even as their methods were vaguely chastised) – that would use such authority “justly”. It'd be naïve to suggest that those that have repeatedly orchestrated coups that changed the course of Global South's history – most likely for the worst – would abstain from using such technology out of a sense of morality that has been absent from their foreign social and economic policies until now.

Interestingly, none of the ten richest countries in the world was accused of using the Pegasus spyware by the Pegasus Project initiative; not one neo- or ex-colonizing nation, was alleged to employ the technology.

This only suggests that most Global North countries, by virtue of their financial power, do not have to outsource their

surveillance initiatives. If anything, this is more alarming; for every individual, a developing, frequently threatened country could observe, the wealthiest western nations have the autonomy and means to spy on thousands.

Yet it is Rwanda, whose most fanciful accusations feature a mere 3500 people (a number that barely covers those that have overtly threatened our stability), including the daughter and supporter of a terrorist, that must answer to the ethics of its intelligence. Whereas the burden of proof is on the accuser as far as all western nation's human rights abuses are concerned, and one must still use the word "allegedly" before linking Europeans to specific coups on African soil, western media does not allow Rwanda the privilege of presumption of innocence. This is the most revealing and vile aspect of this media onslaught on Rwanda. Indeed, to claim that those that chose reconciliation over revenge (as the thousands of once sentenced but now freed genocidaires are living proof of) would abuse their power to oppress simple critics is to project onto Rwanda the obsessive resentment that in fact defines our ardent critics.

This obsessive resentment – that portrays the intentions of Global North's nations in pursuing intelligence as noble, and Rwanda's desire to do the same as evil – stems, of course, from racism. That fact should be obvious from Amnesty International's involvement alone. [Despite a culture of racism in its own workplace](#), this organization is trusted to depict fairly non-white nations; this is deeply insulting. Moreover, it's absurd that Amnesty should be considered a reliable source of information on Rwanda, after spreading a bald-faced lie that the 2017 Rwandan elections -amongst the most peaceful elections in the world – were marred by a "chilling climate of fear".

[The timing is not accidental](#), but neither is post-94 Rwanda's survival against perverted foreign tactics to destabilize the country. Western media and its residue on African soil can

spill all the ink they want, but Rwandans will not allow the Pegasus conjecture to distract, divide, or demonize them.