



News release

SURF supports the Rwandese Community Association's criticism of Paul Rusesabagina and IBUKA's criticism of Hotel Rwanda producers

(London – 24th May 2006) Survivors Fund today expressed its support for the Rwandese Community Association (RCA), an umbrella group that brings together survivors working and living in the United Kingdom, in their criticism of Paul Rusesabagina, currently in the country on a week-long speaking tour to launch his autobiography, *An Ordinary Man*.

This follows the intense criticism that he received from survivors in Rwanda, USA and Canada, for his claims that he saved countless lives due to his role in protecting the Hotel des Mille Collines during the 1994 Genocide, a story made into the recent Hollywood film, *Hotel Rwanda*.

In its letter to Bloomsbury, publishers of *An Ordinary Man*, the RCA requests them to cease their alliance with a "Genocide revisionist who has continued to perpetuate lies about the Genocide and its survivors in order to make a living for himself."

The letter asserts that Rusesabagina is disrupting the development process: "Rwandan people are trying to sew themselves back together after being torn apart by that human tragedy and the likes of Paul Rusesabagina are an unwanted disruption to that process," it adds.

A number of the critics are survivors from the Hotel des Mille Collines. They state that Rusesabagina exaggerates his "heroism" as portrayed in the film *Hotel Rwanda*. They also state that the hotel was under the protection of the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) thus the lives of people he claims to have saved were not actually at risk.

Francois Xavier Ngarambe, President of the survivors' association, IBUKA, a grassroots partner of SURF, castigated the producers of the film for not offering any assistance to orphans and widows of the genocide. They had originally pledged to give five per cent of the proceeds to the survivors.

Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, Director of SURF, commented: "*The letter from the RCA reflects the views of many of the survivors that we have heard from too. Bloomsbury should reflect very carefully on the wishes of the survivors in how they promote Mr Rusesabagina's book.*" She added: "*For too long survivors have lived with broken promises, and the producers of Hotel*

Rwanda should learn from this lesson and fulfil their commitment to give back to the survivors profits made from the film. This is a sad and regretful case of people profiting from the tragedy of others.”

This release is based on a report in The New Times:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200605230335.html>

Notes to Editors:

What is the Survivors Fund?

SURF works to improve the lives of the Rwandan Survivors of Genocide. While the genocide destroyed victims by inflicting excruciating physical pain and terrifying mental abuse, the goal of SURF is to rebuild a sense of self and trust in humanity. To find out more, please visit:

<http://www.survivors-fund.org.uk>