

Rwanda's Migration Agreement with the Trump Administration: A Carefully Calculated PR Move Amid International Pressure

Byline: Unravel with Mugenzi the realpolitik around Rwanda's deportation deal with Trump in the light of international backlash on its involvement with M23 violence in the DRC.

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Rwanda has just launched another major communication campaign by announcing that it is in talks with the Trump administration about a potential agreement to accept migrants deported from the United States. At first glance, this might appear to be a humanitarian gesture. I argue here that it is, in fact, a strategic diplomatic manoeuvre, intended to polish the country's image at a time when the regime faces mounting international condemnation, severe sanctions, and growing economic instability.

This announcement comes at a particularly opportune moment for Kigali. The international community has expressed strong criticism of Rwanda for its alleged support of the M23 rebel group, responsible for massive violence, illegal territorial occupations in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and a large-scale regional humanitarian crisis. These accusations have been formalised in several resolutions, most notably [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2773](#), as well as [official statements from the European Parliament](#) explicitly calling on Rwanda to withdraw its troops and cease all support for armed groups.

In response, several of Rwanda's historic donors, including the United States, have suspended or withdrawn their financial aid. The country now faces mounting diplomatic and military pressure to disengage from the Congolese conflict. It is within this tense context that Kigali took the initiative to propose a migration agreement to Washington. It is essential to note that this proposal appears to have been put forward by Rwanda itself and not by the United States.

This assumption is reinforced by observing how the Trump administration typically communicates. Historically, any new migration policy, especially one as controversial as outsourcing deportation, is loudly announced by Washington itself. The fact that Kigali was the first to disclose this agreement strongly suggests that the idea originated in Rwanda, not in the United States.

The logic behind this initiative is straightforward. The Trump administration has made forced deportations a central pillar of its migration policy. Recently, [U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio publicly stated](#) that the United States was seeking countries to accept "some of these most despicable human beings." Such harsh rhetoric demonstrates how far the administration is willing to go. Rwanda recognised an opportunity to insert itself into this apparatus and to position itself as an implementing partner of this policy, however unpopular it may be.

If the agreement were to be signed, Rwanda would become a key player in the implementation of this deportation strategy. That would place the United States in a diplomatically awkward position. It would become increasingly difficult for Washington to support sanctions against Kigali, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of its involvement in the DRC. Such political dependence would likely weaken Washington's ability to join UN or EU resolutions targeting the Kagame regime and might even force a revision of its own stance toward Kigali.

This kind of realpolitik is not without precedent. France currently finds itself in a similar situation. Despite publicly condemning Rwanda's actions in the DRC, the Élysée Palace has taken a noticeably cautious tone. Why? Rwandan troops are providing security for TotalEnergies' installations in Mozambique, which have been threatened by Islamist insurgents. These sites had previously been shut down temporarily, causing significant financial losses for the French state. As a result, Paris is cautious in its criticisms, wary of jeopardising its strategic investments.

The Kagame regime has mastered the art of turning geopolitical dynamics to its advantage. This proposed migration agreement with the United States is just the latest in a long line of such manoeuvres designed to deflect attention, secure unrestricted funding, and reinforce Rwanda's international legitimacy.

The economic motivations are equally clear. Rwanda is in urgent need of foreign currency. With aid suspended and investor confidence shaken, the country recently issued a ten-year treasury bond worth 7.7 million US dollars to fill a growing budget deficit.

But the economic indicators remain alarming. [The Rwandan franc has lost significant value](#) against regional currencies, down 32.75 percent against the Kenyan shilling, 12.85 percent against the Tanzanian shilling, 12.73 percent against the Ugandan shilling, and 5.37 percent against the Burundian franc. It has also dropped considerably against the US dollar. This situation reflects an economy under intense pressure, exacerbated by diplomatic isolation and sanctions.

Despite this financial crisis, Rwanda continues to invest heavily in its global image. Kigali recently announced [a sponsorship deal with Spanish football club](#) Atlético de Madrid under the "Visit Rwanda" branding campaign. Although the financial terms were not publicly disclosed, I estimate the deal to be worth at least 10 million pounds sterling over three years, similar to earlier partnerships with Arsenal in the United Kingdom and PSG in France. This deal was revealed just one week before the treasury bond was issued, raising serious questions about the government's budgetary priorities. How can such marketing investments be justified while the country is borrowing to cover essential expenditures? This illustrates the regime's obsession with image, which consistently outweighs concern for the well-being of its population.

We must also consider the domestic communication objective. In the face of growing international criticism and sanctions, the regime seeks to reassure its citizens. By announcing a partnership with the United States, the world's leading power, Rwanda projects the image of a globally respected and influential nation, countering alarmist narratives about its diplomatic isolation.

But it is clear that this move has nothing to do with the protection or welfare of migrants. either compassion, human rights, nor humanitarian principles are guiding this initiative. What Kigali seeks are funds, diplomatic recognition, and political immunity. The fate of migrants is merely a pretext, an instrument in a much larger strategic game.

Rwanda is not becoming a haven for the vulnerable. It is instrumentalizing human lives to buy silence, secure resources, and continue pursuing an aggressive regional policy with impunity. And as long as the international community continues to fall for this kind of manipulative diplomacy, history will keep repeating itself at the expense of principle, justice, and fundamental rights.

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