

April 4, 2016

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
United Nations
New York, NY

Your Excellency,

My name is Lievin Manisha. I am an international student from Burundi, studying at Louisiana College in Pineville, LA. I am writing this letter on behalf of all Burundians as we stand together to fight against what we fear will be another genocide due to the rule of dictatorship by President Pierre Nkurunziza. Although I am not physically in Burundi, my heart has never stopped belonging to my country. I have sworn that I will fight against genocide and tribal divisions in my country. In order to fight, one must have a strong voice. We have found this voice in Matthew Russell Lee, with Inner City Press.

On December 23, 2015, I organized a protest against genocide in front of the United Nations in New York. I flew from Louisiana to New York, not because I had money to spend, but because I wanted to contribute in any way that I can to stop the violence and oppressions in Burundi. I felt the UN was the right place to let people know what is going on in my country. I did not have connections with any media organizations and did not know how or if our voices were going to be heard. However, Matthew Russell Lee of Inner City Press was the only journalist who showed up and covered the protest. Matthew interviewed each of us, listened to our stories and understood the message we were trying to convey. After the interview, we were relieved and went home hoping for a change to happen in Burundi. We believed that since Matthew was reporting from the UN, he was able to speak to UN Representatives that I and many Burundians could not reach. We felt he would be able to ask the questions the Burundi people have been seeking answers for. ICP has become the only media outlet covering issues in Burundi when the local Burundi media outlets were shut down. Many Burundians have escaped torture and death from Burundi National Intelligence and police due to ICP reporting.

Besides covering what local media cannot due to lack of freedom of press in Burundi, ICP has inspired and brought hope to many Burundians. I wish to see a more media coverage allowed in my country in order to put an end to corruption and report the truth of the atrocities the Burundi people are experiencing.

In order to set an example to my country, we appeal on your authority as head of the UN for the restoration of ICP's offices at the UN. Additionally, we are pleading for you to provide Matthew Russell Lee with a full accreditation as a reporter with the UN. I understand that we have no power on your authority, but we believe that great leaders from big organizations cannot turn down easily against the will of the people. Your decision to restore ICP's full accreditation and office will be highly appreciated by many Burundians crying out for peace and protection while promoting the freedom of press in Burundi.

Respectfully,



Lievin Manisha