

News24.- 20.09.2023

After 29 years in charge, Rwanda's Paul Kagame says he will run for president again

Після 29 років президентства Руанди Поль Кагаме заявив, що знову балотуватиметься на пост президента

Уряд Руанди вирішив синхронізувати дати парламентських та президентських виборів, які мають відбутися у серпні 2024 року. Президент Руанди Поль Кагаме вперше заявив, що планує балотуватися на четвертий термін на виборах. П. Кагаме раніше не розголошував своїх намірів, але у 2015 році керував спірними поправками до конституції, які дозволили йому балотуватися на додаткові терміни та залишатися при владі до 2034 року, коли йому виповниться 77 років. «Так, я дійсно кандидат», - сказав президент, який десятиліттями правив країною залізною рукою. П. Кагаме фактично керує Руандою з 1994 року.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/after-29-years-in-charge-rwandas-paul-kagame-says-he-will-run-for-president-again-20230920>

Paul Kagame has effectively been in charge of Rwanda since 1994.

He says he'll be running in the next election again.

A 2015 legal change means he could in theory rule until 2034, when he would be 77.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame has said for the first time that he plans to run for a fourth term in elections due to be held next year.

"Yes, I am indeed a candidate," Kagame, who has ruled over the country with an iron fist for decades, told Jeune Afrique, a French-language news magazine, in an interview published online on Tuesday.

"I am pleased with the confidence that Rwandans have placed in me. I will always serve them, as long as I can," the 65-year-old was quoted as saying.

The Rwandan government in March decided to synchronise the dates for its parliamentary and presidential elections, which are due to be held in August next year.

Kagame had previously not made his intentions clear, but presided over controversial constitutional amendments in 2015 that allowed him to run for more terms and stay in power until 2034.

A former rebel chief, Kagame became president in April 2000 but has been regarded as the country's de facto leader since the end of the 1994 genocide.

He was returned to office -- with more than 90 percent of the vote -- in elections in 2003, 2010 and 2017.

While Rwanda lays claim to being one of the most stable countries in Africa, rights groups accuse Kagame of ruling in a climate of fear, stifling dissent and free speech.

- 'Prisoners' -

In 2021, "Hotel Rwanda" hero and outspoken Kagame critic Paul Rusesabagina was sentenced to 25 years in jail on terrorism charges, following his arrest the previous year when a plane he believed was bound for Burundi landed instead in Kigali in what his family called a kidnapping.

Freed from jail in March this year and flown to the United States following a presidential pardon, Rusesabagina released a video message in July, saying that Rwandans were "prisoners in their own country".

The country was ranked 131 out of 180 countries in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

Asked in 2022 if he would seek re-election, Kagame said he would "consider running for another 20 years".

"Elections are about people choosing," he told the France 24 news channel in an interview.

Kagame was just 36 when his Rwandan Patriotic Front party forced out Hutu extremists blamed for the genocide in which some 800,000 people, mainly Tutsi but also moderate Hutus, were murdered between April and July 1994.