

# JKB Korczak Prize in Burundi

## Encouraging peace

by Joël Hakizimana  
IJKnews, May 20<sup>th</sup> 2008

I am a Burundian political refugee that lives in Switzerland since March 1989. I am a 28 year-old companion and father of a 15 months son. I was born in Burundi, in East Africa, South of Rwanda and when I was 9, my father had gone twice in jail as a political prisoner, tortured... and my mother had gone once in prison with one of my brother that was only 5 months. My family had been persecuted because my father was a journalist that did his job well, but in a context of dictatorship... When he escaped from prison in 1988 with other journalist, they came in Europe to say what was happening there in Burundi, then came back home, took his wife and five children and our exile begun.

I grew up in Geneva, Switzerland, where I experienced a new culture in a new society. At the age of eighteen, I was at high school and my brain was in strong activity because of thoughts I had about my origins and situation of a Black guy in a White land. I was good in drawing and literature. When I heard about a literature prize in children's rights, I thought it was my moment to concourse and express my thoughts through a Swiss literary prize. It was the Swiss Janusz Korczak Prize in Children's Rights.

I presented three works: a play Michel & Viviane that was the African translation of Romeo & Juliet involved into an ethnic struggle. The second work was a tale about Africa seen as a woman that had suffered of five century of violence against her body and children. Mother Africa gave birth to Spes, her child to whom she would recount her so long History so that the child would be able to diagnose the causes of Mother Africa's heartbreak. The third work I presented for the literary prize was a comic strip describing the situation of civil war in Burundi compared to a chess play where none is a hero and every player is being putted in check by the adversity.

I went back home in Burundi last summer and I realized the country I was born in were full of military, a lot of children were living in the street and, in that heart of Africa, you could see elderly person sitting at here and there on earth in order to beg anybody some food. I saw bad things and I saw wonderful ones also, all the family I had left, the Land of my childhood... I was back in Heim in order to propose to the authorities State University of Burundi that the Swiss Janusz Korczak Association allowed me to open, under their authority, a State University of Burundi's Janusz Korczak Prize in Children's Rights (IUKB). Each year, the laureate would be invited in Switzerland for a [Summer School in Children's Rights](#) in Sion (Valais), at the International Institute for Children's Right (IDE).

The Burundians authorities replied to me: “what a wonderful project... but we have no money...” and I responded that all we needed was their agreement and participation in the international jury. I was full of good vibrations when I came back in Geneva with the agreement of Burundian Ministry of Education, University Rectorate, the UNESCO Chair and UNICEF. It was late August 2007.

Today, Mai 2008, I have the honour to announce that JKB is still available and already few texts have been sent to the international jury. **But, I am obliged to say that the country is facing a huge insecurity situation. The United States classified Burundi as the fourth Weak State in the World last month, just after Iraq. The United Nations in Burundi have raised the security level for their on staff (4/5). There is a civil war. Innocent people are still being killed for nothing. The University have faced numerous strike and many student are in incarceration. The country needs a peace of hope.**

When I got the Prize in 1999 it was because I had done a description of what Burundi was like at that time, with my own expression. I had seen on TV what happened in Rwanda and I did not want that Genocide to happen again in Burundi. I had heard also things that I have drawn in a comic strip. Today, I come to you again for a Help... We need the United Nations to help for the Reconciliation. This end on May 2008, there have been positive actions such as the return to a negotiation process, the meeting at the European conference of the Burundian Diaspora in Brussels and the constitution of a better union among Burundian abroad in England, the Netherlands and Belgium. One of our patriots has been counted by Time Magazine as one of the 100 people that influenced the world in 2008, the journalist [Alexis Sinduhije](#). That beginning of hope makes me call for an international support, to strengthen Initiatives for more Democracy and Peace.

**I invite on the same time the Burundian students to participate and be involved in that Prize. This would show their strong will to defend this peace of Hope and to promote these values in their own country.**

Joël M. Hakizimana,  
Swiss Janusz Korczak Prize in Children’s Rights, 1999.  
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Permanent link on IJKnews:

English: [http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/call\\_joel-hakizimana\\_prize-jkb\\_en\\_3p.pdf](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/call_joel-hakizimana_prize-jkb_en_3p.pdf)

French: [http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/appel\\_joel-hakizimana\\_prix-jkb\\_fr\\_3p.pdf](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/appel_joel-hakizimana_prix-jkb_fr_3p.pdf)

## More

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### Eligibility to JKB and date line

- [PDF 76 Ko, 2 p.] [http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/conditions\\_prix-jkb-2008\\_en.pdf](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/conditions_prix-jkb-2008_en.pdf)

### JKB regulation (in French)

- [PDF 148 Ko, 3 p.] [http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/reglement\\_prix-korczak-univ-burundi\\_fr\\_3p.pdf](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/jkb/reglement_prix-korczak-univ-burundi_fr_3p.pdf)

### JKB international Partners

The IDE <http://www.childsrights.org/html/index.html> covers the cost of the courses and the staying, due to the attention of its Director Mr Jean Zermatten, Vice Chairman of the Children's Committee at the United Nations. The Prize is supported by the Republic of Burundi, the Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNESCO Burundi, UNICEF Burundi, The NGO CIRID and the Swiss Korczak Association <http://www.aidh.org/korczak> . The Swiss Korczak Association covers the travelling costs from Burundi to Switzerland and back and it also deserve the Prize.

### Burundi links

- Burundi News Free: <http://www.burundi.news.free.fr>
- Burundi Réalités: <http://www.burundirealite.org>
- Burundi Bwacu (+ radio) : <http://www.burundibwacu.org>
- Burundi Info : <http://www.arib.info>
- Burundi CNDD (Gov): <http://www.burundi-info.com/>
- Voice of America (kirundi): <http://www.voa.com/centralafrica/>
- Weak State Index 2008  
[http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/02\\_weak\\_states\\_index/02\\_weak\\_states\\_index.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/02_weak_states_index/02_weak_states_index.pdf)

### Alexis Sinduhije, what the famous journalist say

- (Video 2007, October): Interview about the recent Burundi's History  
<http://www.charlierose.com/guests/alexis-sinduhije>

### A cartoon to promote the peace, by Joël Hakizimana « Were are we going ? »

A document still relevant to discover online (slideshow)

[http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/bd\\_hakizimana\\_1996\\_1/index.html](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/bd_hakizimana_1996_1/index.html)

- BD, bilingual in Kirundi and French [PDF 1,3 Mo, 14 p.]  
[http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/bd\\_hakizimana\\_1996\\_kir-fr\\_14p.pdf](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/bd_hakizimana_1996_kir-fr_14p.pdf)
- BD, Notice to readers translated in English, French and Kirundi [PDF 72 Ko, 2 p.]  
[http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/bd\\_jh-burundi\\_avis\\_trilingue\\_2p.pdf](http://korczak.info/africa/burundi/bd_jh-burundi_avis_trilingue_2p.pdf)
- BD in English [coming soon]
- BD in Swahili [coming soon]