

Mark Medici
PublisherNEWS
Marc Duvoisin
Editor-in-Chief
Nora López
Executive EditorOPINION
Josh Brodesky
Editorial Page Editor
Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson
Associate Editorial Page EditorDIGITAL
Randi Stevenson
Executive Producer, ExpressNews.com
Jess Elizarraras
Executive Producer, MySA.com

Staff file photo

Paul Rusesabagina saved generations. He deserves freedom.

Free the man who saved so many lives

1,268.

That's the number of people Paul Rusesabagina gave refuge to during one of the worst genocides of the 20th century.

Beginning on April 6, 1994, and spanning close to 100 days, nearly 1 million Rwandans were murdered when the country's majority Hutu targeted the minority Tutsi and moderate Hutu. Rusesabagina, a Hutu, used his position as manager of a luxury hotel to give shelter to potential victims.

1,268.

That's the number of people Rusesabagina is credited with rescuing, but the number of lives he saved is incalculable.

Other Views

Joaquin Castro: *Press for Paul Rusesabagina's release.* **A18**

Consider the people who never would have existed had those 1,268 been killed – the children, grandchildren and

great-grandchildren.

Rusesabagina saved members of one generation so they could give life to future generations.

Before 1994, most Americans likely had never heard of the central African country. More attention came in 2004 with the release of the critically acclaimed film "Hotel Rwanda," which told Rusesabagina's story.

Rusesabagina could have basked in the glow of the celebrated movie and his Presidential Medal of Freedom, living comfortably via the lecture circuit or accepting an ambassadorship from Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who has been in power since 2000.

Instead, Rusesabagina has been a fierce critic of the human rights abuses of the Kagame government. In its 2021 World Report, Human Rights Watch notes: "The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) continued to target those perceived as a threat to the government during 2020. Several high-profile government critics were arrested or threatened. ... Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture in official and unofficial detention facilities continued. Fair trial standards were routinely flouted in many sensitive political cases, in which security-related charges are often used to prosecute prominent government critics."

Rusesabagina, who's had a home in San Antonio since 2009, is the most prominent of those critics and is now Rwanda's most prominent political prisoner. In August 2020, he was lured to Dubai, arrested, taken to Rwanda and tortured for four days before his family knew his whereabouts. He was falsely charged with crimes including terrorism, arson and murder.

Last year, he was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison without the government offering any credible evidence. He is a 67-year-old cancer survivor with cardiovascular and other health issues. He has not been provided the medications his family sends.

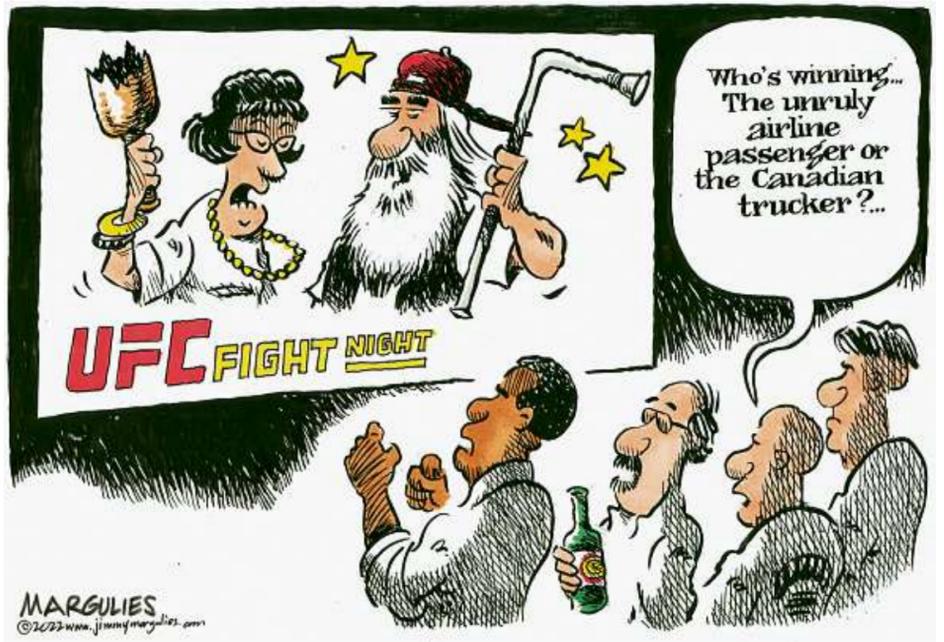
U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro have led the bipartisan demands for Rusesabagina's release and for the Biden administration to exercise more of its leverage against Rwanda.

Last summer, Cornyn organized a bicameral letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, signed by more than three dozen Republican and Democratic senators and representatives, asking him to "use all diplomatic means at your disposal." The letter describes the deplorable conditions of Rusesabagina's detention and possible espionage by Rwanda's diplomatic corps during an online presentation about this detention in a St. Mary's University classroom.

This month, Castro and U.S. Rep. Young Kim, R-Calif., introduced a resolution calling for Rusesabagina's release on humanitarian grounds. It passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee by voice vote.

The European Parliament, the American Bar Association and PEN America have also condemned Rusesabagina's plight. It's long overdue for the Biden administration to condemn Rusesabagina's detention with clarity and force. It's inexcusable for the U.S. government to not use the full weight of its moral and economic power to win Rusesabagina's release.

A man who saved generations deserves freedom.



YOUR TURN

Reason for mandates

Re: "Cruz, Roy are trying again for shutdown," Front Page, Wednesday:

I vehemently disagree with the move by Sen. Ted Cruz and Rep. Chip Roy to shut down the government over the issue of mandates. In my view, neither man understands the purpose of mandates.



Roy



Cruz

Why do we have automobile seat belt and motorcycle helmet mandates? It is not only that these legal requirements save lives, but that automobile and motorcycle accidents cost the government, and therefore the taxpayer, a great deal of money. These accidents frequently exceed insurance coverage and impinge on government subsidies. A similar case applies to taxation on cigarette smoking.

The cost of COVID-19 infections in unprotected individuals has run up large costs to the government and thus to the taxpayer. This is why some countries have strict mandates across the board, as in New Zealand and Australia.

I find our country's policy of vaccine mandates or testing to be a fine compromise in this setting of huge, incurred life and fiscal costs. Unvaccinated, untested individuals risk their lives, put others at risk, increase the likelihood of further virus mutation, and are a significant cost burden on the American people. Freedom is not license.

Richard Albanese

Another vacay, Cruz?

It's not surprising that Sen. Ted Cruz wants to shut down the government over vaccine mandates. It was about a year ago at this time that Cruz evaded the wrath of Winter Storm Uri and its devastating effect on the Texas population by taking his family to Mexico to enjoy the warmth and pleasantries of the

good life.

Apparently, Cruz is so overworked in the Senate, he needs a respite to recharge his battery. It is the negative side of the battery needing a recharge as the positive side is never used. Cruz will never miss an opportunity, whether natural or man-made, to advantage himself.

Sen. Cruz, take heed of what President John F. Kennedy said in his inauguration address: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Keep the government open with positive rather than negative.

John Kepler

Coach more, rant less

Re: "Popovich cries foul on book-banning efforts," Metro, Wednesday:

Once again, the Express-News gives headline coverage to one of Spurs coach Gregg Popovich's rants, this time about parents proposing that certain books be pulled from public libraries and schools.



Popovich

Permitting for the moment the wisdom of such book banning, the real question is why any of us should care what Popovich says about such issues. One can only assume that the reason for the frequent media coverage of his rants on political issues is that he spews liberal messages in line with mainstream media narratives.

Regardless, please give your readers a break from Popovich's pouting. Clearly, he needs to concentrate on making the Spurs a competitive basketball team.

Rand Dennis

Pop a patriot

Bravo to coach Gregg Popovich for continuing to speak out against injustice. He is not "just" a coach but a courageous, patriotic American exercising his First Amendment right and status to try and educate and influence people to do the right things.

Nancy Powlas

Abbott not leading

Greg Abbott has been governor of Texas since 2015. The Republicans have been the majority in our state leadership since the 1990s. And yet they admit in their political ads that crime is up, drug trafficking is rampant, and the number of immigrants crossing the border is up.

All this in spite of wasting millions on a piecemeal border wall and amassing troops on the border.

Our children's test scores and reading levels are down because the state's leaders won't let teachers do their jobs. Our health care system is severely strained because of their laissez-faire attitude toward the pandemic and the sheer number of uninsured in our state. Gun deaths are climbing almost daily.

What have they been doing all these years? And they want us to keep electing them to "lead" our state?

Shirley Moehring

Climate true threat

Re: "U.N. to finalize science report on how warming hits home," World, Tuesday:

"We are losing living spaces for species and for ourselves," a scientist said. "Because with climate change, some parts of the planet would become uninhabitable."

How much clearer can a scientist be? What possible confusion arises from the word "uninhabitable?"

This article, when read with "West's megadrought driest in 1,200 years" (Tuesday, Nation) and "U.S. sea levels set to soar in next 30 years" (Wednesday, Nation) emphasizes the critical need for Congress to take action on the climate portions of President Biden's agenda.

We can argue the benefits of family leave, child care or free college tuition, but we can only do so if we are here to have that discussion. Climate change is the true existential crisis that threatens our existence.

Can the term "uninhabitable" be any clearer?

Stuart Birnbaum



Ethan Swope / Associated Press

Congress must make combating climate change a priority, a reader says, because if the Earth is uninhabitable, what's the point of other policies?

GUIDELINES *Send letters to: letters@express-news.net*

Letters may also be mailed to Letters, Express-News, P.O. Box 2171, San Antonio, TX 78297. Include your name, address and daytime phone number. Length? The shorter the better – long enough to make your point. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.