**BACKGROUND AND LEGAL SYSTEM**

**LEGAL SYSTEM**  
Rwanda’s legal system is based on German and Belgian civil law systems and customary law.

**POLITICAL SYSTEM**  
Republic with a multi-party system. As a result of the recent genocide, Rwanda’s electoral system has safeguards in place that ensure an equitable division of ethnicities in the government. President elected by popular vote for a seven year term.

**HEAD OF STATE**  
President

**HEAD OF GOVERNMENT**  
Prime Minister

**SUBNATIONAL ENTITIES**  
Five provinces: North Province, South Province, East Province, West Province, and Kigali Province.

**SUBLOCAL ENTITIES**  
The provinces are further divided into districts (*akarere*) and municipalities (*umujyi*).

As a result of the 2001 decentralization policy, the administrative structure of Rwanda has changed from Prefecture to Province and from Commune to District. Rwanda has recently redrawn its administrative units to blur the lines of ethnic distinction, which the borders of the previous provinces represented before the 1994 genocide. Rwanda has transitioned from a government of twelve provinces (Butare, Byumba, Cyangugu, Gikongoro, Gisenyi, Gitarama, Kibungo, Kibuye, Kigali Rurale, Kigali-ville, Umurara, Ruhengeri) to five (North, South, East, West, and Kigali) as of early 2006. The implementation of the decentralization policy is still underway.

**NOTE ON PROVINCES**

**TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM**  
Latin.

**LANGUAGES**  
Official; Kinyarwanda, French, English,  
Unofficial; Kiswahili (Swahili).
NOTE ON RWANDAN LEGAL PUBLICATIONS
From 1919-1923, Rwandan legislation was located in the gazettes for the Congo (Bulletin Officiel [du Congo belge]/Ambtelijk Blad. This legislation was also located in Bulletin Officiel [de Ruanda-Urundi] Ambtelijk Blad, which were journals published for the Ruanda and Urundi regions. These journals have been succeeded by the Journal Officiel de la République Rwandaise/Gazeti ya leta ya Republika y’u Rwanda, which was later succeeded by Igazeti y Leta ya Republika y’u Journal Officiel de la Republique Rwandaise (cited herein as Journal Officiel).

CONSTITUTION
Official Name
Itegeko nshinga rya Republika y’u Rwanda.
Constitution de la République du Rwanda (French)
(The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda)

Enactment
June 4, 2003

Citation Format
RWANDA CONST. art. [#] (2003).

Example
RWANDA CONST. art. 180 (2003).

STATUTES
Government Structure
The office name of the government of Rwanda is the Government of National Unity of the Republic of Rwanda.
The seat of government is located in Kigali.

Presidential elections are determined by popular vote. The president serves for a seven year term and may be elected for up to two terms. The Council of Ministers appointed by the president.

The bicameral legislature consists of the Senate (26 seats) and the Chamber of Deputies (80 seats).

The judiciary is composed of the Supreme Court, High Courts of the Republic, Provincial Courts, District Courts, and mediation committees.

Legislative Process
The Transnational Assembly is empowered to enact two different types of laws, organic laws and ordinary laws. Organic laws have more force than ordinary laws but less than the constitution, and require a five/fifths majority. Ordinary laws require a regular majority. In addition during emergency or recess of the transnational assembly the congress has the power to enact decree-laws which have the same force as ordinary laws.
Rwanda, Republic of

REPORTER

Rwanda publishes its laws in a code. There are also laws that are published as Acts that are not incorporated into the existing codes.

Both are published in the *Journal Officiel* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda) which began publication in 1996.

CITATION FORMAT

<name of code or Act> § <number> Gazeti ya leta ya Republika Rwandaise, <month> <day>, <year>.

Example

Civil Code Preliminary Title § 23 Gazeti ya leta ya Republika Rwandaise, January 24, 1999.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE SCHEME

Civil Servants are the main instrument for implementing government policy in Rwanda. Civil Servants work for various Government Departments or Ministries headed by Ministers who have been appointed by the President. These Ministers make up the body of the President’s cabinet.

The Government Departments and Ministries in Rwanda are:

- Local Government
- Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs
- Infrastructure
- Commerce, Industry, Investment Promotion, Tourism and Cooperatives
- Agriculture and Animal Resources
- Finance and Economic Planning
- Lands, Environment, Forestry, Water, and Mines
- Education, Science, Technology and Research
- Health
- Defense
- Justice
- Youth, Sports and Culture
- Gender and Family Promotion
- Public Service, Skills Development and Labor
- Internal Security
- Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
- Minister in the Office of the President
- Minister in the Office of the President in charge of Technology and Research
- Minister in Office of the Prime Minister in charge of Information

SOURCES OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW


**CITATION FORMAT**  Currently Unavailable.

**CODES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Civil</th>
<th>In force May 1, 1992. Amended and reformed version located in <em>Journal Officiel</em> Nov. 1, 1999 (Sections 1-48 address marriage and matrimonial relations; Sections 49-92 address inheritance and succession).</th>
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<td>Code de Commerce (Belge)</td>
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**CITATION FORMAT**  Currently Unavailable.
Rwanda, Republic of

**CASE LAW**

**JUDICIAL OVERVIEW**

Rwanda’s highest court is the Supreme Court, which oversees the nation’s the lower courts and tribunals. The Supreme Court is divided into five sections: The Department of Courts and Tribunals, the Court of Appeals, the Constitutional Court, the Council of State, and the Revenue Court.

The Supreme Court reviews the constitutionality of laws and statutory orders before enactment. It also decides cases on appeals from the lower courts and administrative authorities. The Supreme court is headed by a president and each of the subsections is headed by a vice-president. There are also four courts of appeals, and twelve courts of first instance for each prefecture. The lowest level courts are canton courts.

Judges are appointed by a council made up of the president and vice-presidents of the supreme court as well as a specified amount of judges from each of the lower ranking courts. These appointments are then confirmed by the minister of justice or the President of Rwanda for the president and vice-presidents from the Supreme Court.

In addition to these courts there are specialized courts such as Military Courts. These new courts can only be created under organic legislation.

**REPORTER**

Code d’Organisation et de Compétence Judiciaires

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<tr>
<th>CITATION FORMAT</th>
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<td>CONSTITUTIONAL COURT</td>
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<td>HIGH COURT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Washington University Manual of International Legal Citation
SOURCES

Official Website of the Republic of Rwanda
http://www.gov.rw/

CIA Factbook; Rwanda,

Ministry of Local Government, Community Development, and Social Affairs

BBC: Rwanda Redrawn to Reflect Compass
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4577790.stm

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INTRODUCTION TO RWANDAN LAW, WILLIAM A. SCHABAS & MARTIN IMBLEAU, 3-30,
1997.

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