



2nd June, 2016

H.E Rémi Maréchaux
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary; and
Permanent Representative to UNON, UNEP & UN-Habitat
Embassy of France
Barclays Plaza, 15th Floor, Loita Street
Nairobi

Dear Sir,

RE: PROTEST LETTER ON THE CANCELLATION OF OUR TOWN HALL DEBATE

We write to express our displeasure following the unjustifiable cancellation of a town hall debate that was scheduled to be held at Alliance Française Nairobi on 26th May, 2016.

Kura Yangu, Sauti Yangu is a citizen movement spearheaded by a number of like-minded civil society organizations, who have come together to proactively support Kenya's preparations for the 2017 elections with a view to ensuring that the country minimizes the risks related to dysfunctional electoral systems and practices which the country has experienced in the recent elections.

Through *Kura Yangu, Sauti Yangu*, a number of citizens and stakeholders concerned that the forthcoming elections should be the occasion for strengthening national cohesion and integration and deepening electoral integrity and accountability; have been working towards political dialogue with a view of establishing sufficient common ground to inform preparations for the 2017 elections. *Kura Yangu, Sauti Yangu* believes that political consensus on the elections will increase public confidence and ultimately make both the process and results more credible and legitimate, and therefore contribute to the overall state of political certainty and stability of the country.

The town hall debate was organized by the *Kura Yangu, Sauti Yangu* Coalition on the premise of the recent calls for dialogue especially on the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC) issue. It was meant to bring together the 2013 elections' presidential candidates and the citizenry to discuss and propose possible solutions on what should be done with the IEBC in the context of the contestation by the various political formations in the country. It was therefore meant to provide the members of the public a platform to engage with the political leaders on an issue that will adversely affect the 2017 elections if left unaddressed.

Co-Conveners



The Civil Society Organizations
References Group



The Independent
Medico-Legal Unit



The African Center
for Open Governance



Constitution & Reforms
Education Consortium



icj International
Commission
of Jurists
KENYAN SECTION | Since 1999

We were clear in our communication with the officials at Alliance Française regarding who was to attend the event, and at no point was the Coalition informed of any difficulties that may arise from hosting the event at the premises.

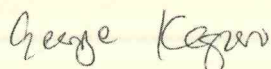
Whereas it was argued by your Embassy that the debate was partisan due to the absence of representation from the government and by extension the Jubilee Coalition, we would like to clarify that all our interventions have sought to be inclusive. Prior to the debate, we have held consultative meetings with various State and non-state actors, including members from the opposition, the government, the Constitutional commissions including the IEBC, religious groups, the business community, trades unions, and the diplomatic community, among others. At no point have we deliberately omitted the government or any other key stakeholder in our interventions. To this end, we wish to point out that an invitation to attend and participate at the debate was extended to the leadership of the Jubilee Coalition who turned it down.

For an institution that identifies as 'operating autonomously with no political or religious commitments', the cancellation by Alliance Française of our debate based on political grounds and direction from your Embassy, therefore seemed to have contravened this policy.

It would therefore have been prudent at the very least, as a strong proponent of democracy, for your Embassy to grant a section of the population the time and space to freely express their opinions regardless of their political persuasions. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right which is crucial to the development of a just and democratic society. Cognisant of the position that France has undertaken to promote and protect the respect for human rights as prioritised in its foreign policy, the *Kura Yangu, Sauti Yangu* is of the opinion that the restriction imposed on this right through cancellation of the event based on political considerations by the Embassy was therefore unfair, discriminatory and unconstitutional.

Kura Yangu, Sauti Yangu thus takes the position that your Embassy did not provide any reasonable basis or justification to warrant the cancellation of our event and would wish to urge that your Embassy consistently and objectively supports endeavors that seek to achieve political democracy at all times.

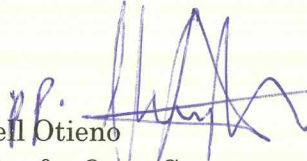
Yours faithfully,



1. Mr. George Kegoro
Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)
Co-Convener – Kura Yangu, SautiYangu



2. Ms. Regina Opondo
Constitution and Reforms Education Consortium (CRECO)
Co-Convener – Kura Yangu, SautiYangu



3. Ms. Gladwell Otieno
Africa Centre for Open Governance (AFRICOG)
Co-Convener – Kura Yangu, SautiYangu



4. Mr. Samwel Mohochi
The Kenyan Section for International Commission of Jurists (ICJ-Kenya)
Co-Convener – Kura Yangu, SautiYangu

5. Mr. Peter Kiama
Independent Medico Legal Unit (IMLU)
Co-Convener – Kura Yangu, SautiYangu



6. Ms. Njeri Kabeberi
The Civil Society Organization Reference Group (CSO-RG)
Co-Convener – Kura Yangu, SautiYangu