

American Pastor Deported From Rwanda After Rebuking Country's 'Heathen Practices'

An American pastor was deported from Rwanda after criticizing the government's "heathen practices," reports the Washington Examiner.

Rwandan police arrested Rev. Gregg Schoof for "disturbing public order" after he tried to hold a news conference without permission, reports *The New York Times*. Schoof, an evangelical missionary and pastor, moved to Rwanda 16 years ago and has rebuked the country's government for allowing abortion and teaching evolution.

The government shut down Schoof's radio station, Amazing Grace Christian Radio, after one of its speakers, Nicolas Niyibikora, called women evil multiple times, reports CNN. The Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority took away the station's license because it failed to comply with regulations imposed as a result of the sermon insulting women.

In response, Schoof attempted to call a news conference and even invited Rwandan journalists to come. He planned to discuss the court case surrounding the radio station, according to Reuters. But police arrested him and turned him over to the Rwanda Investigation Bureau "for further management."

Schoof said in a statement released Sept. 7 that the Rwandan government didn't renew his visa when he applied:

"When we went to renew our visas, we paid for two-year visas, but they only gave us two-month visas. We appealed to the director, and we got a final answer: We are being kicked out of Rwanda. Try to logic this out: Church—illegally closed.

Radio—illegally closed. So now, because we are 'not doing anything,' they cannot give us visas."

As of Sept. 7, Schoof had planned to move his family to Uganda. But the Rwandan government deported him to the United States on Monday, Oct. 7.

Rwanda has closed down thousands of other churches in the last few years. In response, pastors and human rights advocates have protested, claiming that the government is attempting to restrict the people's religious freedom. The government claims the churches they have shut down did not meet building safety standards.

"Thousands of faithful are now secretly praying in their houses for fear of government crackdown," one anonymous pastor told RNS. "When the government arrested the six pastors, it was like a stern warning to others not to resist the new laws on churches. We are feeling pain as pastors but we can't talk about or discuss the issue. ... How can leaders deny their people the right to worship freely?"