

SA adman feared abducted in Rwanda

Criticism of Rwandan President Paul Kagame is believed to be the reason behind the disappearance of South African advertising professional, Leon Orsmond. He has been missing for six weeks.



MISSING: Leon Orsmond.

Orsmond, a well-known South African advertising man who has been working in Rwanda for more than eight years, disappeared without trace in the capital Kigali on 17 February 2018. In the days leading up to his disappearance, 60-year-old Orsmond posted a number of posts on his [Instagram](#) feed and Facebook page, [Freedom Of Speech Rwanda](#), in which he was highly critical of Rwanda's President Paul Kagame.

He was also putting the final touches to a book called *Banana Republique* which was critical of the Rwandan state. Orsmond is a colourful character who contributed to Bizcommunity.com in the early part of this century. He worked at some of South Africa's leading advertising agencies - Leo Burnett, Ogilvy and Bernstein Loxton Golding & Klein - including a stint in Dubai at Ogilvy One as executive creative director, before making his home in Rwanda in the last decade.

He set up Osmosis, a viral creative think tank and social networking agency, working on clients from Dubai to Johannesburg, from his base in Rwanda. His profile on Bizcommunity.com lists clients such as: MTN, Skol Lager, RDB and Nike.

Missing

A cousin, Digby Orsmond, who lives in the UK, and his stepdaughter, Chelsey May, who is from Johannesburg, have reported his disappearance to both the South African and Rwandan authorities, but there has been no official confirmation that he has been arrested or detained. It is believed that Orsmond had been living illegally in the country after both his passport and visa had expired some years ago.

“ Still missing: SA Creative Director Leon Orsmond (Osmosis Leon on FB) living in Rwanda. Friends say maybe detained in Rwanda for political criticism. "If he's still alive we need to let the Rwandans know that we will not stop looking for him." [#paulkagame](#) [#RwandaLaFinDuSilence](#) pic.twitter.com/LLHygZDk0r— Wendy M 🍀🍀🍀🍀🍀 (@Wendymoor) [March 23, 2018](#) ”

According to May, her stepfather's last post on social media was on 17 February. She became concerned about a week later when she had heard nothing from him and they were in regular contact. All her attempts to get hold of Mr. Orsmond on his phone and via messages and email were unsuccessful.

May says she has it on good authority from three different sources that her stepdad was arrested at his home in Kigali by security forces not reporting to the Rwandan National Police. When May contacted Orsmond's landlord, from whom he had been renting a room for years, the landlord denied even knowing Orsmond.

DIRCO, the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation have been liaising with their Rwandan counterparts, but as yet they have not had any feedback. The Rwandan National Police have tweeted that they are aware of his disappearance and have requested information from anybody who may have news of his whereabouts.

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