

Foreign minister says VRT reporter lacked proper accreditation to cover UCI Road World Championships in Kigali

Rwanda's government has rejected claims it barred Belgian journalist Stijn Vercruysse from covering the 2025 UCI Road World Championships, saying the Flemish broadcaster VRT tried to slip him in without proper accreditation.

Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe said Vercruysse, a political reporter, was never eligible to cover the event because accreditation is issued by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) to sports journalists only. More than 700 accredited reporters from across the world are currently in Kigali following the competition, he noted.

"Sports journalists from around the world registered with the UCI to cover this historic championship," Nduhungirehe wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "Yet VRT tried to bypass the rules by registering a political journalist known for constantly denigrating Rwanda."

Some European outlets and Vercruysse himself had suggested Rwanda was behind the move after he was stopped from boarding an SN Brussels flight. In interviews with Belgian media, he admitted he had planned a story criticizing Rwanda as "an authoritarian regime" while it hosted the world cycling showcase.

Nduhungirehe said that intention proved the case was about politics, not press freedom, and stressed that global standards for sports reporting apply everywhere.

"In Belgium, as in other countries, you cannot be accredited to major sporting events unless you are officially registered as a sports journalist," he said. "If you attempt this kind of fraud in the United States, you are arrested, deported, and banned from re-entry for years."

The minister added that VRT tried to secure Vercruysse's access through the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a move he said violated international sports media rules.

The 2025 UCI Road World Championships, underway in Kigali through Sept. 28, mark the first time the event has been staged in Africa. The competition has drawn 920 riders from 101 countries, as Rwanda looks to showcase itself as a rising hub for international cycling.