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## Rwanda: RPF CRIMES (14.07.09)



### RPF War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Crimes of Genocide

1. **The Ruhengeri city attack of January 23, 1991:** The RPF staged a night attack on the city of Ruhengeri, resulting in heavy civilian casualties and heavy property damage. The RPF opened the gates of Ruhengeri prison, freeing many prisoners and enrolling them as fighters. The RPF also engaged in heavy looting activity in the city, and **a reported 400 people** were forced out of their homes to help carry the loot. These 400 civilians were all killed afterwards, along with **another 100 civilians** around the city as the RPF retreated back into the volcano forest. (Abdul J. Ruzibiza, Rwanda, L'Histoire Secrete, 2005, p. 132)
1. **The Butaro massacre of May 199**
2. **2:** At Rusasa in the commune of Butaro, in the province of Ruhengeri, the RPF attacked displaced people on a small island in the swamps of Rugezi, destroying their shelters and killing their goats and sheep. **150 people** were reportedly killed in this attack. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)
1. **The notorious Ruhengeri and Byumba massacre of February 8, 1993:** The RPF staged a major attack in several communes of the Provinces of Ruhengeri and Byumba, killing many people and inflicting heavy damage on state and privately-owned property. During this attack, the RPF killed a total of **24,400 people in Ruhengeri**, and of **15,800 in Byumba**. (James K. Gasana, Rwanda: du parti-Etat a l'Etat garnison, 2002, p. 185)
1. **The political assassination of May 18, 1993:** The RPF is reported to have killed **Emmanuel Gapyisi**, a prominent political leader from the south and vice president of the MDR party. He was one of the most clear-minded and respected leaders of the MDR party. His killing removed a powerful RPF opponent because Gapyisi was very critical of RPF violent methods and practices. But this also was an extremely reckless crime capable of plunging the country into widespread violence between southerners and northerners especially if the former came to believe the latter had killed their man. Gapyisi's killing was among the first in a wave of

assassinations nationwide targeting Hutu political leaders, including businessmen, mayors, parliamentarians, and leading up to the assassination of Gatabazi, Bucyana, and finally President Habyarimana. An investigation is needed to clear the mystery of these assassinations once and for all.

1. **Other crimes and terrorist acts:** Throughout the year of 1993, Rwanda experienced a **major spike in acts of armed banditry, grenade attacks and mini-bus taxi explosions in several parts of the country**. According to several credible witnesses, among them former RPF officer Lieutenant Abdul Rizibiza now in exile in Norway, **the acts were the work of infiltrated RPF hit squad members and spy operatives all belonging to the “RPF Network”**, who were assigned to spreading violence and insecurity, thus rendering the country ungovernable in a bid to overthrow the government and seize power by force. (Abdul J. Ruzibiza, Testimony of Abdul Ruzibiza, March 14, 2004)

#### **IV. RPF CRIMES FROM JANUARY 1, 1995 TO PRESENT (NOVEMBER 8, 2006)**

##### **RPF War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Crimes of Genocide (January 1, 1995 – Present: November 8, 2006):**

1. **The gruesome Kibeho massacre of April 17-23, 1995: an estimated 4000 internally displaced people** were reported killed on the orders of Major General Paul Kagame when army units collectively fired on the Kibeho camp that was estimated to shelter about 100,000 people, indiscriminately killing unarmed men, women, children, and many elderly. Paul Kagame, then vice president and minister of defense, reportedly had established his local operations headquarters in nearby Butare to closely supervise the siege and dismantling of the Kibeho camp. **It took one full night of non-stop body disposal by truck towards the Nyungwe forest for mass incineration** (many areas of the site were cordoned off for supposed “security and military reasons”) before the RPF allowed journalists, independent observers and UN monitors, to access the site. (Paul Jordan, Witness to Genocide – A Personal Account of the 1995 Kibeho Massacre, 1998; Abdul J. Ruzibiza, Rwanda, L’Histoire Secrete, 2005)

This was a well-publicized massacre brazenly carried out by the RPF government, in the presence of the UN military contingent from Zambia and officials from NGO’s assisting these refugees, and many pictures of which were taken and made public. The simple question, then, is why hasn’t there been any independent inquiry so that the perpetrators can be officially identified and punished?

1. **The deadliest year of 1996: the year of the infamous mass murder of refugees in Zaïre (currently the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and forced deportation of refugees:** The RPA army carried out perhaps the most brutal and genocidal campaign in modern history by attacking the sprawling refugee camps in Goma and Bukavu in Zaïre, home to an estimated 1 to 2 million Rwandan refugees. There is little doubt that among these refugees were those who had participated in the mass killings inside Rwanda 2 years before. But the RPA army put the guilty and the innocent in the same bag, and indiscriminately fired on the camps and crowds of unarmed fleeing refugees, especially women, children and the elderly who were the weakest and unable to run fast, hunting down many of them like beasts deep into the tropical Zairian forest all the way to Tingi Tingi and Mbandaka. By all accounts, **it is estimated this whole**

**operation claimed the lives of 400,000 Rwandan refugees.** While this operation was underway, the RPA army undertook one of the biggest deportation campaigns ever, by forcibly (i.e. against their will) airlifting an estimated 700,000 refugees back to their respective original communes in Rwanda. Then the RPF started a long-running criminal process of killing these returnees, as a result of which about 50% of the returnees are not living today. These horrific crimes, both in Zaïre and in Rwanda, were executed with orders received from their leaders. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living; Marie Beatrice Umutesi, *Fuir ou Mourir au Zaïre: Le vécu d'une réfugiée Rwandaise*, 2000)

The International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development (CIDPDD), in teaming with the African Association for the Defense of Human Rights in DRC (ASADHO), concluded that *"It appears pertinently that the Rwandan government can be held accountable for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide"* in their document entitled "Report of inquiry by the international non-government commission on human rights violations in DRC (former Zaïre) 1996-1998", 1998, p.78.

1. **The slaughter of the Nyarutovu wedding, January 18-19, 1997:** In the night of January 18-19, 1997, the RPF attacked and killed each and every one of the guests, including the bride and groom and their parents, at a civil wedding in the home of Major Laurent Bizabarimana in Nyarutovu in the northern province of Ruhengeri. **50 people** were collectively slaughtered that night. Major Laurent Bizabarimana and his family had recently returned from Zaïre during the massive forced deportation by the RPF, and became victims of a brutal RPF nationwide campaign inside Rwanda to eliminate "genocidaire elements" from among these returnees. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)
1. **The horrors of the Nyakinama Cave, October 23-28, 1997:** RPA soldiers are reported to have pursued and killed **8,000 unarmed civilians, especially women, children and the elderly who were too weak to run** who had sought refuge in the cave of Nyakinama, in the commune of Kanama, to escape indiscriminate shootings and bombings by the RPA in the area. RPA soldiers reacted by lobbing grenades and other explosives into the cave, then went on to seal off the entrance of the cave with rocks and gravel so no one would be able to come out. ( Amnesty International, *The dead can no longer be counted*, report, December 1997)
1. **The Hutu Christmas massacre of Kayonza, December 23-25, 1998:** In the evening hours of December 23, 1998, a passenger on a mini-bus taxi from Kigali got off near Nyagatare, and suddenly fired a gun into the air before running off into the hills of near-by Ngarama. The next day, people woke up to road blocks at Kayonza and Musha, and to military security sweep operations in the surrounding communes of Ngarama, Muvumba, Murambi, Kayonza, and Bicumbi. All taxis to and from Kigali were stopped and carefully screened for Hutus, who were ordered out before the taxis were allowed to resume their journey. These Hutus were then all executed using guns or used up hoes, then loaded up onto trucks and shipped to humming incineration centers in the Mutara region, with the ashes later dispersed into the Akagara National Park. **An estimated 5,000 innocent civilians, including the cousin of one witness,** perished in this macabre 2-day operation. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)
1. **The brutal reprisal campaigns against Abacengezi (1997-2000) and the ethnic cleansing of the Mutara region (1995 and after):** From 1997 to around 2000, the RPF faced an increased number of cross-border raids from Zaïre into Rwanda carried out by remnants of the previous

army who called themselves “Abacengezi” (or inroad specialists). Each time they attacked, the RPA army responded by unleashing a brutal reprisal campaign targeting the civilian population, especially in the northwestern provinces of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, in order to break the will of the insurgents, many of whom originated from these provinces. **More than 50,000 people** were killed in many communes of these 2 provinces from 1997 to 2000. In the meantime, the RPF returned to the Mutara region in the northeast and started where it had left off in cleansing the area of all ethnic Hutus. The RPF decimated native Hutus, as well as other Hutus who had immigrated into this once under-populated area from other parts of the country in search of land and new jobs during the 1960’s, 1970’s, and 1980’s. The Mutara region is now the new all-Tutsi land of Rwanda, complete with farms and cattle ranches for the Tutsi herders. There have been reports that these ranching activities, in search of grazing pasture, have led to severe encroachments into the adjacent Akagera National Park, destroying the ecosystem of the area and the natural habitat of many wild animals. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)

## V. OTHER ALLEGED RPF CRIMES

1. **The crime of denying people their right to seek medical treatment overseas:** Since taking power in July 1994, the RPF has put in place a criminal policy of systematic non-issuance of medical treatment exit visas for people it wants to punish for multiple reasons. These are mostly people who have voiced their criticism of the government or the army, or are perceived to be in the political opposition, etc. One of the most glaring cases is that of **Father Andre Sibomana**, former Editor of the independent newspaper “*Kinyamateka*”, and a former interim Bishop of the Diocese of Kabgayi after the assassination of Bishop Thaddee Nsengiyumva in June 1994. He was a staunch social justice advocate and human rights activist known for his editorials denouncing the excesses of the RPF regime. He was never allowed to seek expert medical treatment overseas, and succumbed to his illness in Kabgayi at the young age of 43 on March 7, 1998. **Dr. Jean Bagiramenshi**, a veterinarian who worked for the government and later consulted for the World Bank, was another victim of this policy. He suffered from multiple ailments, including kidney malfunction and gout, and may have had liver problems as well. He was prevented several times from seeking medical treatment out of Rwanda on his own money, and by the time he was allowed to leave, it was too late. He died in Belgium in 2005. **Investigations must be carried out to determine how many people have fallen victim to this criminal policy.** (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)
1. **RPF death squads on the trail of opponents inside and outside Rwanda:** On May 5, 1998, **former Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga** was assassinated in Nairobi, Kenya; on October 6, 1996, **Colonel Theoneste Lizinde** and **businessman Augustin Bugirimfura** were assassinated in Nairobi, Kenya; in the night of February 14-15, 1999, former CEO of Rwanda African Continental Bank (BACAR) **Pasteur Musabe** was assassinated in Yaounde, Cameroon. Inside Rwanda, former Council of State president **Vincent Nsanabaganwa** was assassinated on February 14, 1997; former presidential advisor **Assiel Kabera** was gunned down on March 5, 2000; on April 7, 2003, parliamentarian **Leonard Hitimana** was assassinated, and no inquiry has been conducted. Two weeks later on April 23, 2003, **Colonel Augustin Cyiza** was abducted and killed. **Edouard Mutsinzi**, former editor of “Le Messenger” newspaper in Kigali, was abducted and beaten up, with his ribs broken, his eyes taken out, and his brain damaged so bad that he lives in a vegetative state in Belgium. All the victims were

either critics of the government or potential compromising witnesses in possession of top state secrets. These crimes and many others were reported to have been committed by RPF death squad members assigned to do the dirty work against RPF opponents in different world capitals. They must be investigated, and their perpetrators brought to justice.

1. **The cruel and inhumane use of prisoners in de-mining operations:** The RPF has been reported sending hundreds to Hutu prisoners to their immediate death by forcing them to run in areas where landmines are suspected of having been planted by the ousted army, especially in the Bugesera region. These allegations must be fully investigated and prosecuted. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)
1. **The cruel and inhumane treatment and exploitation of Rwandan prisoners in the Congo war for the profit of President Paul Kagame:** During the Congo war and the occupation of Eastern DRC by the RPA, reports abounded about Rwandan prisoners being sent to die at the forefront of a brutal war of occupation and exploitation of the DRC. There were also numerous reports that hundreds, maybe thousands, of Rwandan prisoners were sent to RPA-occupied areas of the Congo to work as forced labor in the digging of minerals, especially Coltan, gold and diamonds, for the top brass members of the RPA army, starting with President Paul Kagame himself. This was a flagrant violation of international laws governing prisoners and a despicable trampling of human dignity. A full investigation and prosecution of these crimes is warranted. (Testimony provided by witnesses, still living)

## **VI. FINAL OBSERVATIONS**

1. When this RPF crime compendium is released, I expect the RPF government to hit back with blanket accusations, without any proof, that I am a “revisionist and a negationist of the Rwandan genocide”, and that “I harbor an ideology of genocide and divisionism”. The international community must take a very close and careful look at such character assassination, and in many cases outright persecution, of all real and perceived contrary opinion holders and political opponents, social justice advocates and human rights critics in Rwanda by the RPF government, and find a proper way to address it.
1. The present compendium was conceived as an effort to document most reported and under-reported crimes by the RPF organization as a predominantly Tutsi rebel group and government with a view to bring to light its apparent share of responsibility in the whole Rwandan tragedy. Even though it places a premium on seemingly forgotten Hutu casualties, this document did not and does not intend to belittle Tutsi and Twa casualties of the Rwandan genocide. All sons and daughters of Rwanda, as well as foreigners who perished in this tragedy were a terrible loss to humanity and must be equally mourned and remembered, regardless of their ethnicity. We need to know with certainty who massacred the Bagogwe Tutsi sub-clan of Gisenyi in 1991 and 1992. We need to know with certainty who butchered the Banyamulenge Tutsis and Bagobwe Tutsis sheltered at Mudende camps in August, November, and December 1997. We need to know with certainty who killed the American, British, Australian and New Zealand tourists at Bwindi National Park in Uganda in 1999. Who killed the Spanish volunteers in Rwanda in 1997 and in Congo in the following years? Who abducted, mutilated and killed former Rwandan cabinet minister Juvenal Uwiringiyimana before dumping his body in a Brussels canal in December 2005? Was he or not a victim of the RPF death squad in Europe as widely suspected? **The overall goal of this document is to lift the cloud of mystery and secrecy**

**hanging over the Rwandan tragedy. It is to fight impunity and help bring equitable justice to Rwanda: whoever killed a Tutsi must pay, whoever killed a Hutu must pay, whoever killed a Twa must pay, and whoever killed a foreigner must pay.**

1. Rwandan President Paul Kagame is now widely believed to be behind the shooting down of the aircraft carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana on that fateful night of April 6, 1994. In that capacity, he is the suspected triggerman of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the architect of the genocide after 1994. Kagame outright denies these allegations. But a better way to refute the charges and clear his name once and for all is to allow an independent investigation to look into these crimes. Of course Kagame will never request such an independent investigation, because he knows he is guilty. That's why we ask the UN to mandate the ITCR to investigate these tragedies not covered by the current mandate.
1. The provinces of Byumba and Ruhengeri did not experience the wave of genocidal killings that engulfed the rest of the country in April 1994, because they were already under RPF control. Yet, the vast majority of families currently living in these regions (about 80% of all inhabitants of these areas) are made up of widows and orphans, who tell stories of their husbands and fathers having been killed by the RPF. International non-government organizations (NGO's) have been prohibited by the RPF government to go into these areas and assist these widow-run families to move ahead, and to mend the traditional family nucleus and the social fabric which have been completely shattered. Families in these areas with a member in the previous government army have been especially targeted and hit the hardest by the RPF. The simple question is this: why has the international community remained blind in the face of such blatant brutalization of human life? From 1990 to 1994, a reported 400,000 people have died in these areas. Who killed them?
1. Reports have circulated that many extremist RPF members in Kigali and other cities had large caches of weapons in their residences, and had dug up very deep pits in their backyards a few months before the genocide. What was the purpose of these weapons and pits? There have been reports that in the ceasefire months leading up to April 1994, many RPF youths received extensive fire arms training in the CND parliament building housing the RPF battalion, and at the RPF headquarters in Mulindi. Also, it is no secret that while the ruling MRND party had the Interahamwe militia, the MDR party had the JDR (Democratic Republican Youth) militia, and the PSD party had the Abakombozi militia, the RPF had a youth militia of its own that inflicted as much damage as the other militias. An independent inquiry of these facts is needed, and witnesses are available to testify openly.
1. The killings in Rwanda in 1994 were called genocide. Today, the killings in Darfur are being denounced as genocide. The killings in Zaire from 1996 to 2001, which took the lives of more than 4 million innocent lives, were called just that: killings. Where is the logic? Some of the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide have been punished, and from all indications the perpetrators of the Darfur genocide will be punished, since the setting up of an International Criminal Tribunal for Darfur is already in the works. That's all good. But when are we going to have the International Criminal Tribunal for Congo? When will the perpetrators of the Zairian killings be punished? Never mind calling the Zairian killings genocide, can their perpetrators at least be punished? There are countries which do not have a total of 4 million inhabitants. That's a lot of people to kill and live freely ever after. We all know beyond a doubt that the RPF committed these killings. You, the international community, can you tell us who you hold

responsible for these wholesale massacres? For the same crimes, there must be the same punishments.

1. More than 50% of current inmates in Rwanda have no official criminal charges against them, but continue to be kept in jail and out of active life. The government keeps the inmates on meager meals that must be supplemented with additional food rations from their families, or they will die from hunger – **when they do not succumb to torture so rampant under different forms inside official prisons throughout the country and inside hidden unofficial torture centers.** In most cases, women, including those educated, cannot keep a paying job because they need 2 to 3 hours per day to go feed their husbands in jail. No employer will agree to so much time off every day. **This means that for the 100,000 married men in prison, there are 100,000 women not working, or a total of 200,000 people not actively contributing to the economy. With an average of 4 children per Rwandan household, that's a total of 400,000 children nationwide that lack parental guidance and money to attend school. And all of a sudden, the grim picture of the legacy of the RPF regime comes into full focus: the pauperization and illiterate-ization of an entire generation of Rwandans.** If this is not slow genocide, then genocide does not exist. **Truthfully, there are 5 main factors of genocide: bad leadership, bad media, impunity, poverty, and lack of education.** Today, all these 5 genocide factors are in place in Rwanda. The height of injustice in Rwanda can be summed up this way: **many** innocent Hutu civilians are in jail, while **all** criminal RPF elements are free. Where is the UN while all of this is happening? There cannot be any possible reconciliation in any nation where one part of the population is having a field day at the expense of the other part of the population on its knees.
1. Joseph Matata, a Rwandan human rights advocate who heads the Brussels-based “Center against Impunity and Injustice in Rwanda”, has reported that about 100 ex-FAR military officers are jailed at the Kibungo military prison since April 1999. An additional 37 or so ex-FAR military officers remain unaccounted for, while many other former comrades have been summarily executed [*Report of April 14, 1999*]. The “official” political parties in Rwanda today function under the umbrella of the so-called “Forum of Parties” where the RPF is sole master. In view of all this, the question is this: Does the Arusha Peace Agreement of August 1993, painfully reached between the then-RPF rebels and the then-government, and which called for a merger of the 2 fighting armies and free political activity in Rwanda, have any relevance left?
1. Contrary to RPF claims, there is no peace in Rwanda. That explains why far too many Rwandans continue to flee overseas and are easily granted asylee or refugee status. How long is the RPF going to use genocide as a pretext to stifle democracy and entrench one of the most predatory dictatorships ever? Political opposition is completely muzzled. How long will the people of Rwanda continue to die a slow death? Former President Pasteur Bizimungu and his collaborators, such as Charles Ntakirutinka, are rotting in jail for having started a political party. In fact, in Rwanda there is no shortage of political prisoners, prisoners of opinion, prisoners of hate, prisoners of race, etc., and Colonel Stanislas Biseruka, reporter Dominique Makeri, and Colonel Patrick Karegeya are only a handful in a long list. You, the ICTR, whose original mandate was to reconcile the Rwandan people among other things, what is going to be your legacy for Rwanda when your time expires?
1. The recent brutal killing of many businessmen among them Fulgence Nsengiyumva of Gitarama, aged 49, by the RPF government army on August 6, 2006 must be condemned vehemently. His wife is being persecuted for reclaiming the confiscated truck that belonged to

him, and their 5 innocent children will be traumatized for the rest of their lives. The recent arrest, search and strip of old women in an open market place by RPF police in broad day light as a way to humiliate and force all old and barefoot women to never set foot in a market place again, is abhorrent and must be condemned vehemently. The on-going campaign to ban bicycles and motorcycles from cities, especially Kigali, as well as the on-going campaign to raze all banana plantations, is an act of economic depredation on the Rwandan population by its RPF government and will result in the starvation of the masses. It must be condemned vehemently. **The on-going campaign to expel from Kigali city all the poor, all AIDS orphans, all war widows and war invalids, is criminal. It all started with a seemingly simple desire to take the poor away from the city, then the campaign targeted the bare-foot crowd, then those wearing sandals and slippers, then the pedestrians, then the bicyclists, and finally the motorcyclists. Who is it going to be next? There is clearly a pattern of criminal exclusion that must be condemned. In reality, this whole campaign is an empty attempt by RPF rulers to project to visitors and donors the deceptive impression that Kigali in particular, and Rwanda in general, are well-managed to deserve more financial aid. Chasing all these poor people away from the city without addressing the root cause of their misery is a window dressing, whitened-sepulcher, or sweep-under-the-rug type of approach to development, and it obviously can't help any poor Rwandan. It can't fool any foreign donor country either.** So the simple question to the United Nations is this: why are the people of Rwanda being so toyed with, persecuted and killed by their own government in this fashion and nothing is being done about it?

1. **Finally, what is Presidential Immunity?** It seems to mean that someone can kill all the people he or she wants, and not worry about any consequences as long as he or she is president of a given country! We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and humanity sure can come up with better laws.

## **VII. GENERAL CONCLUSION:**

**The above list of RPF crimes is by no means exhaustive.** There are reports of countless RPF crimes before 1994, in 1994, and after 1994 that could not be compiled in this document. For example, in the small eastern town of Muhura as the RPF marched onto Kigali in the Spring of 1994, General Paul Kagame himself is reported not only having given direct orders to fire on crowds of wandering displaced people, but also having personally sprayed bullets into these crowds with his own machine gun. An investigation of this massacre is needed, and witnesses are available to tell the story.

Currently, there is a general, state-sponsored crime being perpetrated by the RPF government against an entire segment of the Rwandan population, specifically Hutus, through **the infamous Gacaca Courts**. The RPF government is attempting to incriminate the biggest number of Rwandans possible by officially labeling them “killers” or “genocidaires”, thus ostracizing them from public life and creating a caste of second class citizens or “untouchables”. Gacaca trials are an age-old, small-courts-type Rwandan tradition designed to settle only misdemeanors, such as stealing a cow, a goat, or chickens, and minor land disputes between neighbors. By its nature, a Gacaca trial does not require judges and jurors to have law school training and degrees, only common sense. Conversely, the crime of genocide is so grave by nature that it cannot be tried in a Gacaca court, with semi-literate judges and jurors, and with no legal defense, without being diminished and debased.

The justice system in place wants detainees to admit to the crime of killing if they want to be freed. Then, they head to a local Gacaca court where they not only must confess (and explain) their crimes but also reveal and denounce other killers. Anything short of this is a half-confession and not acceptable, and the suspect must go back to jail. In other cases, witnesses are produced from the woodwork to incriminate suspects for crimes they never committed. Very clearly, there is an attempt here on the part of the RPF government to humiliate and exterminate an entire people.

I, Paul Rusesabagina, personally know of specific cases where this has happened. The international community must condemn this abhorrent system and demand its immediate abolition.

[Source](#)