

Where are the 1,100 Genocide fugitives ?

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Since the Genocide Fugitives Tracking Unit (GFTU) was established in 2007, it has issued 1,146 indictments and arrest warrants against Genocide fugitives in 33 countries, Jean-Bosco Siboyintore, the head of GFTU has said.

GFTU operates under the National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA).

Siboyintore made the revelation last Friday on March 12, during the training of Rwandan parliamentarians on the convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

He was making a presentation on the current state of pursuing fugitives of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, challenges, strategies and the contribution the parliamentarians in tackling them.

He said that among other challenges, there is lack of political will among countries to extradite the Genocide suspects to Rwanda so that they stand trial, or at least try them

in their courts, indicating that legal action has been taken against only 46 suspects either way.

This figure suggests that 1,100 genocide fugitives have not yet been brought to book.

The above-mentioned Convention was approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948. It entered into force on January 12, 1951.

Among other provisions, it states that Genocide and related acts shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition. The countries which are parties to the Convention commit in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

Siboyintore said that the fact that the Genocide suspects who are roaming freely abroad is one of the contributing factors to the trivialisation of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi.

Among the Genocide suspects at

large, there is Lieutenant Colonel Pheneas Munyarugarama who was commander of Gako Military Camp ; Charles Sikubwabo, former burgomaster (mayor) of Gishyita Commune in the former Kibuye (in current Karongi District), and Aloys Ndimbati, former burgomaster of Gisoovu Commune also in the former Kibuye Prefecture.

These are considered genocide masterminds and their indictments were referred to Rwanda by the now-defunct International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Where the genocide suspects are living

Of the 1,100 Genocide fugitives, Siboyintore said that 408 are in the neighbouring DR Congo, 277 in Uganda ; 63 in Malawi, 52 in Tanzania, 47 in France, 42 in Congo Brazzaville, while 40 are in Belgium.

Other countries are Kenya where 35 Genocide suspects are believed to reside, 23 in America (USA), 18 in The Netherlands, Zambia harbours 15, Burundi hosts 15, Canada 14, Mozambique hosts 13 and 11 are in Central African Republic.

Also, 10 suspects are in Cameroon, seven in Norway, Sweden, and Gabon, each ; Germany, UK, and South Africa hosts five, each ; and three are in Denmark, New Zealand, Ivory Coast, and Switzerland each.

Finally, two Genocide suspects are believed to be in Zimbabwe, two

in Swaziland, while one was reported in Finland, Ghana, Benin, and Australia each.

What will it take to bring them to justice ?

Bringing the Genocide fugitives to book has taken long, as about 27 years have elapsed since the Genocide was committed.

But, some parliamentarians and government officials are optimistic that justice will finally be done for the Genocide victims since its crime is imprescriptible – not subject to statute of limitations.

Some of the challenges Siboyintore cited include Genocide fugitives who use refugee status and political reasons as a pretext for not being tried for the crimes they are suspected of.

However, he said that a person should not be granted refugee status when they are being pursued for international crimes.

Others are people who use the tact of changing their identity and nationality, which makes it difficult to track him.

Siboyintore said that the counter strategy to this issue is to work with Rwanda's embassies and the diaspora so that whoever knows the suspect who changed names or other details should report that to prosecution.

“There are collaborators who [falsely] announce that a suspect died because they know that the dead is not

pursued [judicially],” he said.

According to the Ministry of Justice, Rwanda has so far signed extradition treaties with 10 countries.

Jean-Damascène Bizimana, Executive Secretary of National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) said that there are countries that have not yet included punishment of denial and trivialization of the genocide against the Tutsi in their legislation.

He said that there is a need to drum constant reminders about the international resolutions punishing genocide, its denial and minimisation during summits such as the 2021 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which will take place in Kigali in June this year so that they are implemented.

Speaker Donatille Mukabalisa said that the country will never relent or give up on efforts to ensure that all

the Genocide fugitives from all their hideouts are brought to book, indicating that effective collaboration such as parliamentary diplomacy, is key.

“As parliamentarians, we will continue to use international legislative assemblies to which we are members to remind our counterparts where Genocide fugitives are harbored, or continue to give platform to those who propagate genocide ideology, deny and minimise the Genocide against Tutsi, that they have to be brought before justice either in Rwanda or in those countries,” she said.

She added that the Rwandan legislature will lobby the enactment of laws that implement the international conventions to which those countries are signatories and the resolutions adopted by the UN because it has been indicated that there is a gap in that regard.

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