

Murambi Genocide victims remembered

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Residents, international visitors and government officials on Sunday joined survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi, to pay tribute to more than 50,000 Genocide victims laid at Murambi Genocide Memorial in Nyamagabe District.

During the event, remains of 294 victims were relocated from Gasaka memorial to Murambi, which is a former technical school.

Speaking during the event, Jean-Damascene Bizimana, the Executive Secretary of CNLG, said that 25th commemorative event at Murambi was unique since it is one of the ten sites that were prepared to be most visited by the youth during the commemoration period this year.

“We selected ten memorial sites, including Murambi, where the youth visit to understand the Genocide history and strive for preserving memory and evidence since about 70 per cent of the current population in Rwanda are under 30,” he said.

Some of the ten memorial sites, he said, include Bisesero in Karongi District and Mwurire and Rubona in Rwigyema District, among others.

The youth will also visit other historical sites for the liberation struggle by RPF-Inkotanyi to retrace the journey made by the forces that liberated the country and stopped the Genocide

against the Tutsi.

The sites include one in Gicumbi District where the headquarters of the liberation force were based for the longest time of the struggle – which is currently the National Liberation Park Museum.

Meanwhile, Bizimana told mourners that Murambi, was previously part of Gikongoro prefecture, which traces the history of pogroms targeting the Tutsi since 1959.

Murambi memorial, on the other hand, is the site of one of the most unforgettable horrors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi since refugees flocked to the half-built technical school when they were told that this is where they would be kept safe.

It was a ploy whereby by the leaders of the time would bring their targets together so they can be easily massacred, and on April 21, the army and Interahamwe militia moved in and killed more than 50,000 Tutsis.

Some of the remains of Genocide victims have been exhumed and preserved with powdered lime together with victims’ belongings like clothes they wore when they were killed as proof of the genocide that took place in the area.

To be able to preserve memory, the memorial has been divided into different sections and one of them is

the mass graves where the more than 50,000 victims of the genocide are laid to rest.

Some rooms in the former technical schools have also been converted into preservation areas, where embalmed bodies of the victims are kept in open space for visitors to witness the scale and nature of the death that the victims experienced.

There's also a section of trenches where bodies of the victims were thrown after they were killed and a volleyball pitch where a French flag was raised since the area was near a military camp for French army who were in Rwanda under so-called humanitarian mission Operation Turquoise.

The French soldiers, who deployed in Rwanda at the height of the Genocide, instead of saving the Tutsi who were being killed in several thousands a day, worked tirelessly to offer an escape corridor to the génocidaires, as they killed all the way to their refugee camps in DR Congo.

There is also a memorial garden.

The embalming of the bodies of the Genocide victims is being done with support from experts from the Institute of Legal Medicine at the University of Hamburg in Germany.

Addressing the mourners, Justice Minister and Attorney General John-

ton Busingye reiterated the efforts to prosecute Genocide fugitives wherever they are including those who planned and executed genocide in Murambi.

He also criticised the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, which took over from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, for granting early release to genocide perpetrators tried by the court, with no justification.

“Among the Genocide perpetrators in this former Gikongoro prefecture include Col Aloys Simba who was recently released before completing his sentence – which was already too small given the atrocities he committed. We will continue to work with these courts to make sure such as decisions are avoided,” he said.

He also pointed a finger at Laurent Bucyibaruta, the then prefect of Gikongoro, who stays in France.

“Bucyibaruta is in France and we are hopeful that one day he will be prosecuted since there is all the evidence needed,” he said.

Naphtal Ahishakiye, the Executive Secretary of Ibuka, said that much have been achieved to rebuild the country and restore Genocide survivors' hope as well as bringing the Genocide perpetrators to book.