

Rwanda: Key Bruguiere Witness Retracts Testimony

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Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza, the man who French Judge Jean-Louis Bruguière and his Spanish counterpart used to build their controversial cases to indict senior Rwandan officials, has retracted his testimony.

In a Radio interview with popular Rwandan private radio station, Contact FM, the former Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) officer revealed that the indictments were politically manipulated by high ranking officials within the French government with the aim of discrediting the government of Rwanda.

Ruzibiza, the principle witness two controversial cases, confessed that the case was fabricated by him with the assistance of senior French government officials and members of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

The dramatic revelations follow the Sunday arrest of Rose Kabuye, the Director General of State Protocol who is currently detained at Reungsheim Women's Prison near the German city of Frankfurt.

Kabuye was one of those indicted by the French judge.

"The indictments are based on a story mounted (framed) by none other than me and all the witnesses they tal-

ked to, they went through me and I know how it was planned from the beginning," Ruzibiza exclusively revealed to Contact FM Tuesday evening.

According to Justice Minister Tharcisse Karugarama, Ruzibiza is the third witness to retract his testimony after Deus Kagiraneza and Emmanuel Ruzigana, with the potential of greatly undermining the French judge's case.

Ruzibiza said that his meeting with Jean Louis Bruguière, was arranged by members of the FDLR through the French Embassy in Kampala.

"I was in contact with him (Bruguière) through the embassy of France in Kampala and all the communication was handled by the FDLR leadership," said Ruzibiza.

He added that prior to his meeting with Bruguiere; he met with a policeman who was working with the President's office in France at the time known as Pierre Payebien.

"This policeman wrote the document and gave it to the judge who just signed it and also gave it to me to sign I never spoke to Bruguière. Even for the 30 minutes we were together, we actually did not even exchange more than five words as far as I remember," he said.

"The whole story was mostly fra-

med by me and I am ready to bear all the consequences," added Ruzibiza.

Ruzibiza, who claims to have closely followed the machinations by the French government in their efforts to discredit the Rwandan government, added that Kabuye is a victim of these machinations.

Together with eight other former senior officers in the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA), a force that ousted the genocidal government, Kabuye is accused by the French judge of having participated in the shooting down of the plane that was carrying former president Juvenal Habyarimana.

"She was not anywhere near the operations and her arrest is illogical and absurd she is just a victim," said Ruzibiza who fled the country over eight years ago.

He also challenged the credentials of Bruguière as a judge saying that the latter is a politician who is currently an advisor to President Nicolas Sarkozy.

He further challenged the legitimacy of the indictments which were issued for the death of the French military cabin crew who was in charge of Habyarimana's Falcon 50 jet.

"What business does a military crew have in a purely civilian jet? Their

being there was illegitimate. These were just mercenaries," said Ruzibiza, who was also a member of the RPA during the 1990-94 Liberation struggle.

"This renders the whole file unreliable and flawed as we have always maintained and this shows how dangerous this case is," said Karugarama, who is also Rwanda's Attorney General.

He added that from the beginning, everything was manufactured to suit French interests.

Speaking on the legality of the change in testimony, Athanase Rutabingwa, a lawyer, said that the retraction of a testimony by a witness is admissible in court, saying that it serves the interest of the accused person.

The indictments which were issued on the basis of the principle of international jurisdiction have been grossly contested by different parties both nationally and internationally. They deemed them an abuse of the international law.

Kabuye was arrested on Sunday at Frankfurt Airport as she arrived to prepare a Presidential visit. She has since requested to be extradited to France to plead her innocence.