

# THE NEWTIMES

Rwanda's First Daily

## Parents demand for their illegally adopted children



Tharcise Karugarama shows the Mucyo Commission Report implicating France in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide to the media and public. (File Photo).

**EASTERN PROVINCE** - A number of parents from the former Umuvumba (currently part of Nyagatare District, Eastern Province) requested the government to intervene in the repatriation of their children who were taken to Europe during the 1994 Genocide and illegally adopted.

### The children are said to be living in France

According to the Mucyo Report on the role of France in the Genocide, the children in question were formerly sheltered at St. Agathe orphanage centre which was located in Masaka, a Kigali suburb.

The report also says that the orphanage was headed and funded by Agathe Kanziga, the spouse of Rwanda's former Head-of-State, Juvenal Habyarimana.

The centre was run by the Saint Vincent Palotti Sisters who were apparently mandated with receiving orphans of the Rwanda Armed Forces (FAR) soldiers killed in combat.

At the orphanage, Sister Edita, a Polish citizen, was given the responsibility of finding families in Europe, especially France to adopt these children.

A dozen parents, who preferred anonymity for security reasons, allege that their children were taken during the evacuations of French nationals in the 1994 Genocide by French soldiers.

One of the angry parents who recently talked to this reporter complained that since their children were evacuated by the French evacuation squad at the height of the Genocide, they (parents) have not got any information on their whereabouts.

Parents of the illegally adopted children maintain that the methodology applied for adoption of their children contradicts Article 341 of the Rwanda Constitution.

The law states that to legally adopt a child, the supreme prerequisite is the consent of both parents, meaning the father and mother and adopting parent before a notary or in front of the Registrar of their respective residence.

"No single article was complied with. So, we need to see our children back because we as their parents never consented to their adoption. We understand that they were taken in the wake of the 1994 Genocide but even after the Genocide, nothing was done. Our government has to intervene and return them," another angry parent underscored.

Yet another parent said that she appreciated the fact that the issue of their children was given prominence in the Mucyo Commission report. That this gives them hope that the human rights organisations will intervene to restore the rights of both parties.

According to the Mucyo report, the St. Agathe orphanage leadership was politically motivated by the then political ideology of the time which includes ethnic discrimination against the Tutsi or Hutus who

distanced themselves from the ideology.

The report also reveals that selective evacuation was carried out by the French in April 1994. According to the report, those evacuated from the orphanage were first accommodated at a reception centre for asylum seekers in Créteil, a region in Paris.

They were then taken to Olivet in the south of Orléans where, for two and a half years, they were accommodated in a property put at their disposal by the General Council of Loiret, from whence they were entrusted to families.

**Ends**