



custom
news

- WORLD ↓
- asia-pacific
- europa
- americas
- afrika ←
- middle east
- U.S.
- LOCAL
- WEATHER
- SPORTS
- SCI-TECH
- TRAVEL
- STYLE
- SHOWBIZ
- BOOKS
- HEALTH
- EARTH
- SPECIALS

CNN
allpolitics
CNNfn
EN ESPAÑOL
COMMUNITY

Message Boards
Chat
Feedback

SITE SOURCES
Contents
Help!
Search
CNN Networks

SPECIALS
Quick News
Almanac
Video Vault
News Quiz

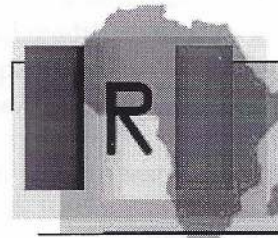

infoseek®
email
lookup
EXPLORE

Slain Rwandan was to testify at genocide court

May 18, 1998

Web posted at: 9:31 a.m. EDT (1331 GMT)

ARUSHA, Tanzania (Reuters) -- A former Rwandan minister murdered in Kenya had agreed to testify in the trial of a compatriot charged by a U.N. court with genocide, a defense lawyer said on Monday.



Defense lawyer Pascal Besnier told the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) that Seth Sendashonga, a former Rwandan interior minister, had agreed to speak in defense of his client Obed Ruzindana, the Hironnelle News Agency reported.

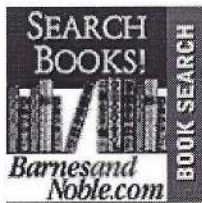
Ruzindana and Clement Kayishema were jointly charged with genocide, inciting genocide and crimes against humanity during the slaughter of over 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda in 1994. Both have pleaded not guilty.

Sendashonga, a former interior minister, was gunned down Saturday with his driver in Kenya's capital Nairobi.

A Hutu, Sendashonga joined the rebels of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in exile in 1992.

With President Pasteur Bizimungu, he was the most powerful Hutu in the RPF-led government formed in July 1994, after the genocide, but he was sacked a year later.

He fled to Kenya in 1995 where he led moderate Hutus who opposed what they saw as increasing oppression of the ethnic majority by the RPF and mainly Tutsi army.



Hundreds of thousands were killed in the 1994 genocide

Friends of Sendashonga accuse the Kigali government of ordering his murder. He was shot and injured in an earlier attempt on his life in Nairobi in 1996, an attack that sparked the expulsion of Rwanda's diplomats from Kenya.

On Monday Besnier told the court, established to try the chief suspects of the genocide, that Sendashonga had been approached eight days ago and had readily agreed to give evidence as an expert witness, in part because he was opposed to the manipulation of the true circumstances."

Sendashonga had expressed willingness to testify in an open court and also to be identified, Besnier said. His only condition was that he be called as late as possible in the trial.

Besnier said the tribunal had not previously been informed of Sendashonga's willingness to appear, but on Monday he introduced a letter formalizing an agreement to testify and asked the court that statements he had made to defense lawyers be admitted to the court.

The prosecution did not oppose the motion on condition it constituted a deposition rather than evidence. It was the first time either a current or former member of the RPF had agreed to testify at the ICTR.

The Rwandan government derides the ICTR on the grounds it is moving at snail's pace and that the maximum sentence the court can hand down is life imprisonment.

The ICTR currently holds 23 genocide suspects and is yet to complete its first trial.

Rwanda's jails are bulging with 130,000 genocide suspects awaiting trial under that country's legal system. More than 300 have already been tried and more than 100 sentenced to death. The first 22 public executions were carried out on April 22.

Copyright 1998 Reuters Limited. All rights reserved.

Related stories:

- Former Rwandan minister shot dead in Kenya - May 16, 1998
- Former Rwanda leader pleads guilty to genocide - May 1, 1998
- Rwanda to carry out first executions for 1994 genocide - April 22, 1998
- Ex-French officials deny France aided Rwandan genocide - April 21, 1998
- Rwandan priests to die for aiding Tutsi massacre - April 18, 1998
- Rwanda plumbs unanswered questions of 1994 genocide - April 7, 1998
- Clinton meets Rwanda genocide survivors - March 25, 1998

Related sites:

Note: Pages will open in a new browser window

- Rwanda - Index on Africa
- United Nations
 - U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997 - U.S. Department of State
 - 1997 Human Rights Report: Rwanda
- Rwanda Page - Department of African Studies, University of Pennsylvania
- The World Factbook page on Rwanda

External sites are not endorsed by CNN Interactive.



Sound off on our message boards & chat

