

Today in History: Creation of a genocidal government

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Jean Kambanda

On April 8, 1994, Théodore Sindikubwabo, the then speaker of parliament announced the formation of an interim government, of which extremism against the Tutsi was the sole criterion to make it to the cabinet.

Sindikubwabo had with support of the Akazu, an inner-circle of anti-Tutsi extremists, assumed the presidency following the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana whose plane was shot down on the evening of April 6.

Sindikubwabo particularly worked closely with Theoneste Bagosora, then a powerful permanent secretary of the ministry of defence to select the cabinet lineup.

Bagosora, who has been accused of masterminding the shooting of Habyarimana's plane, was the convener of the meeting that established the government, according to available records.

The meeting took place at the former Hotel Diplomate, which was where the current Kigali Serena Hotel is built.

This set in motion a genocide machine, where each

member of cabinet would be evaluated on the number of Tutsi killed in one's particular area of birth than services offered to Rwandans.

In a demonstration that he was leading by example, Sindikubwabo immediately travelled to his birthplace of Butare, currently part of Southern Province, to "launch" the Genocide against Tutsi.

"He [Sindikubwabo] clearly stated that he was there to launch the massacre [against Tutsis]. We turned up to welcome the president clad in banana leaves and carried our weapons, which included machetes, clubs and axes," Dominique Ndahimana who pleaded guilty told The New Times in a previous interview.

"He was flanked by military guards who launched the killing of Tutsis at a nearby church, giving us a go-ahead to kill. His speech gave us the green light to kill. Personally, it was a stimulus that encouraged me to participate in the killings."

Butare is known to have been a scene of massive rape against Tutsi women and their daughters, and places such as Kabakobwa, Simbi, Kabuye, Ngoma, Matyazo, Kansi, Karama, Mugombwa, Muyira, Songa and Nyamure, were turned into 'slaughter houses'. Thousands of Tutsis perished there.

Jean Kambanda, the Prime Minister of the genocidal regime pleaded guilty before the then International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) of the role of his government in orchestrating the genocide in which over a million people were killed.

Kambanda is currently serving a life sentence in a prison in Mali.

Other prominent figures in the genocidal government include Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the then Minister for Family and Women's Affairs, who became

the first woman to be indicted by any international court on accusations of Genocide.



Pauline Nyiramasuhuko

Nyiramasuhuko's virulent actions were most tested in Butare, where she worked with militias including her own son, Arsene Ntahobali to kill, maim and rape women.

Once she arrived in Butare town during the Genocide, cars with loudspeakers drove around the streets announcing that the Red Cross had set up a camp in a stadium to provide food and shelter to the population.

It turned out it was an Interahamwe trap to bring together thousands of Tutsis so that they can be easily killed.

Nyiramasuhuko personally supervised the killings at the stadium and encouraged the participation of the Interahamwe, and she ordered that women be raped before being killed.

She also went to an encampment where a group of Interahamwe were holding prisoner about 70 Tutsi women and young girls and gave an order to the Interahamwe to rape them before dousing them with petrol and burning them to death.

Nyiramasuhuko and her son have also been convicted by the UN court and were both sentenced to life imprisonment.

Another member of the genocidal cabinet is Eliezer Niyitegeka who was the information minister and was convicted by the ICTR of; genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitation to commit genocide, murder as a crime against humanity, extermination as a crime against humanity, and of other inhumane acts as a crime against humanity.

Niyitegeka participated in mass killings and torture, most prominently in the Bisesero region of the former Kibuye Prefecture, where tens of thousands of Tutsis were killed.

He was born in Kibuye.

He also led an attack against Tutsis who had taken refuge on the Kazirandimwe hillside, where the attackers got a well-known Tutsi, Assiel Kabanda, whom they decapitated, castrated and had his skull pierced through from one ear to the other with a stake.

His genitals were attached to a spike and put on public view.

He also ordered the Interahamwe to undress a Tutsi woman who had just been shot to death, to fetch a piece of wood, to sharpen it at the end and to then insert it into the woman's genitalia, which they did.

Niyitegeka was handed life sentence in 2004 a sentence that was upheld on appeal. In December 2008 he was transferred to Mali from where he was to complete his sentence.

He died in prison on March 28, 2018.

However, despite the lengthy guilty plea by Kamanda on the role of his cabinet in the extermination of the Tutsi, many members of the genocidal cabinet were acquitted by the UN Court.

The then Minister for Transport and Communications, André Ntagerura was charged with conspiracy to commit genocide, genocide, and complicity to commit genocide, extermination as a crime against humanity, as well as outrages on life, health and physical and mental well-being of persons in addition to cruel treatment.



Andre Ntagerura

Despite having 41 witnesses and indictment evidence against him on the stand, he was found not guilty of the six counts with which he was charged and was subsequently freed.

Others freed include the former ministers whose case had been enjoined in what was called the Government II trial at the ICTR.

These included; Jerome Bicomumpaka, the then foreign affairs minister, Casmir Bizimungu, who was Minister of Health, Justin Mugenzi, the Minister of Commerce at the time and Prosper Mugiraneza, who was the Minister of Civil Service.

Bizimungu and Bicomumpaka were acquitted on 30 September 2011, while Justin Mugenzi and Prosper Mugiraneza acquitted on appeal on 4 February 2014.

Other members of the Genocidal cabinet who were acquitted include Andre Rwamakuba, who was the Minister of Education.

The only member of the genocidal cabinet who was tried locally is Agnes Ntamabyariro, who was in 2015 sentenced to life imprisonment.

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