

Genocide fugitive Nzigiyimfura arrested in U.S.

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A Rwandan man accused of playing a role in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi has been arrested in the United States for allegedly lying on immigration and naturalization documents in an attempt to cover up his past.

Vincent Nzigiyimfura, 65, was taken into custody on Wednesday, June 12, in Dayton, Ohio, and made his initial court appearance the following day before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio. According to the statement released by the U.S. department of Justice on June 13, he is being charged with one count of visa fraud and two counts of attempted naturalization fraud.

If convicted, Nzigiyimfura could face up to 30 years in prison. The sentencing will be determined by a federal judge based on U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

According to U.S. authorities, Nzigiyimfura concealed his role in the 1994 Genocide while applying for immigration benefits, including permanent residency and naturalization, in an elaborate scheme spanning more than a decade.

“The United States is not a safe haven for human rights violators. Those, like the defendant, who commit immigration fraud to hide their violent pasts will be charged and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” said Matthew R. Galeotti, Head of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division.

According to the statement released by the U.S. Department of Justice, the indictment paints an alarming picture of Nzigiyimfura’s alleged crimes in Rwanda. At the time of the Genocide, he was a businessman and butcher in Southern Province, where he reportedly held influence in and around the Gihisi and Nyanza areas.

“Nzigiyimfura allegedly provided weapons, transportation, and other material support to fellow perpetrators. He is also accused of organizing roadblocks where Tutsi victims were detained and killed, using his vehicle to transport materials for constructing the barricades,” the indictment states.

Even more prosecutors say Nzigiyimfura planned a cruel tactic to lure Tutsi survivors out of hiding. He allegedly spread false information that the killings had ceased, only to round up and have them murdered.

The U.S. government has emphasized that such atrocities will not be ignored, regardless of how much time has passed or how far perpetrators may flee.

“His indictment and arrest are a step toward justice for those victims,” said Jared Murphey, Acting Special Agent in Charge of ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Detroit. “No one wants a war criminal as their neighbor, and these allegations paint a grim picture of the horror Nzigiyimfura inflicted on the Tutsi people.”

Covering up the past

Following the Genocide, Nzigiyimfura fled Rwanda and lived in Malawi before beginning his path toward U.S. residency. Between 2008 and 2009,

he allegedly submitted fraudulent applications for an immigrant visa and alien registration, falsely claiming he had never participated in genocide or persecuted anyone.

He also submitted an affidavit claiming he had “left Rwanda in 1994 due to the Genocide,” when in fact, he was fleeing accountability for his role in it.

In 2009, Nzigiyimfura entered the United States based on those false claims. Five years later, in 2014, he applied for U.S. citizenship and again lied to authorities, denying he had ever committed a crime or misled U.S. officials.

During a naturalization interview that November, he reaffirmed these falsehoods under oath. His citizenship application was never granted, but he continued to live in the U.S. undetected.

In 2018, Nzigiyimfura applied for and received a replacement green card, set to expire in 2029.

Three years later, in July 2021, he used that card as identification when applying for an Ohio driver’s license, another move prosecutors say was part of his long-running scheme to maintain a false identity.

The indictment is part of ongoing efforts by the U.S. government to hold accountable people who committed war crimes abroad and later sought refuge in the United States through deception.

“This horrible conduct will not be tolerated,” said Kelly A. Norris, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio. “The indictment alleges this defendant facilitated the killings of Tutsi during the Genocide and then lied about it on immigration applications.”