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I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on the Genocide against the Tutsi, which originated from colonialism that imposed ethnic divisions, leading to the preparation and execution of the genocide, witnessed by the international community. A brief review of the history I will share shows that no country in the world has spent 109 years destroying another like Belgium has done to Rwanda.

It began in 1916, when Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom agreed to redefine the borders of Rwanda, which had been expanded under King Ruganzu II Ndoli (1600-1623) and King Kigeli II Nyamuheshera (1648-1692), reaching into territories such as Masisi, Rutshuru, and others. What followed were repressive laws, including the decree of 21 March 1917 instituting corporal punishment, that of 26 July 1925 stripping Rwanda of its sovereignty, and the law of 11 January 1926 stipulating that Rwanda would henceforth be governed by Congolese law. These laws institutionalised injustice and sowed division among Rwandans.

Between 1924 and 1946, Belgium signed agreements with the League of Nations (and later the United Nations), undertaking to lead Rwanda:

- towards political autonomy; economic, social, and educational development;
- towards capacity for self-governance;
- in accordance with human rights principles, without discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, language, or religion.

These commitments were never upheld. Instead, Belgium introduced ethnic divisions among the Rwandans, similar to what existed between the Flemish and Walloons in their own country. Between 1926 and 1932, it initiated a social revolution led by two Belgians, Voisin and Mortehan. King Musinga, who opposed this move, was exiled to the Congo on 12 November 1931. He was replaced four days later by Mutara III Rudahigwa, who agreed not to challenge colonial authority, was baptised in 1943, and consecrated Rwanda to Christ the King in 1946. Pope Pius XII awarded him a medal, which he received on 20 April 1947. In return, the colonial authorities granted Rudahigwa greater freedom, enabling him to challenge injustice and advocate for independence, actions that angered the colonisers. Governor Jungers and Brother Secondien, head of the Butare College, then decided to eliminate him. Rudahigwa was poisoned and died on 25 July 1959.

No other African country has seen two of its monarchs eliminated by colonial powers.

Belgium later created the PARMEHUTU party, founded on ethnic ideology. This party issued four successive manifestos (9 October 1959, 27 August 1961, 21 June 1964, and 7 June 1969), claiming that Rwanda belonged exclusively to the Hutu and that the elimination of the Tutsi was government policy. On 3 November 1959, Colonel Logiest, assisted by Major Marlière, was dispatched to Rwanda to abolish the monarchy, accompanied by Belgian and Congolese troops.

On 12 November 1959, Logiest ordered the forced deportation of Tutsi to specific areas particularly Bugesera. By the end of 1961, 13,890 people had been displaced to Bugesera, living in horrible conditions. Despite repeated pleas to return to their homes, Belgium refused. Some Tutsi tried to settle discreetly in other areas but were driven out.

For example, on 1 August 1960, the Nyanza administrator, Emmanuel de Jamblinne, wrote: *“People expelled from the Gitarama are attempting to settle in Mayaga. Expel them immediately. They cannot stay in Mayaga or anywhere in the Nyanza area. They must go to Bugesera. Enforce these orders right away. Their cattle must also be removed.”*

On 17 November 1959, on the advice of Monsignor Perraudin, Logiest summoned the administrators and ordered them to dismiss all Tutsi employees and replace them with Hutu. He formalised this directive in a circular dated 23 December 1959, describing it as *“a favour granted to the Hutu, so they may be governed by their own kind.”* The UNAR party, which advocated for independence, was falsely portrayed as a Tutsi-only, communist, and anti-Catholic group despite its inclusive membership, including its president - François Rukeba, and secretary general - Michel Rwagasana.

On 23 June 1961, Belgium passed a controversial amnesty law, releasing 2,000 individuals involved in the massacres between 1959 to 1961. The law specified that those granted amnesty were individuals who:

- killed or burned people alive in their homes;
- slowly tortured or seriously injured others;
- organised or ordered looting and murders.

Ethnic discrimination persisted in the formation of the national army, created by Colonel Vanderstraeten with Logiest’s approval on 29 September 1960: *“The national army shall be composed exclusively of Hutu. We shall not invoke impartiality or democracy to admit a single Tutsi. Those attempting to join shall be declared unfit. Although this policy is unjust, we do not wish to mix goats with sheep. We refuse to integrate elements that could create problems within our ranks.”*

Belgian intelligence services voiced their concern in a report dated 30 April 1961: *“In Rwanda, army recruitment is restricted to the Hutu. Once in leadership, these forces prioritise Hutu allegiance over professional duty. We consider it dangerous to entrust them with national security.”*

General De Cumont, responsible for training Belgian officers, wrote to the Minister of Defence on 27 November 1961: *“Maintaining a policy that entrusts Rwanda’s internal security and border protection to its army risks leading to massacres that the UN could deem genocide thus exposing us to accusations of complicity.”*

In March 1962, the Rwandan army launched a wave of massacres in Byumba, killing over 2,000 Tutsi, including nurse Claver Ndejuru, who was murdered in Ngarama as reported by various international media. In December 1963, under the command of Belgian officers Dubois, Florquin, Turpin, and Frans, the Rwandan army perpetrated mass killings across the country, claiming the lives of more than 35,000 Tutsi. Diplomats, missionaries, journalists, and foreign researchers unanimously classified these atrocities as genocide.

A telegram from the Belgian ambassador dated 24 December 1963 stated: *“Many people are being illegally detained. I note that the situation is heading towards a mass massacre of the Tutsi.”* The French ambassador, Marc Barbey, reported on 4 January 1964: *“In the Gikongoro region, the Hutu have unleashed violence against the Tutsi, massacring them indiscriminately. As of 25 December 1963, the number of victims had already reached 15,000.”*

On 31 December 1963, the same Ambassador Barbey reported that ministers had been dispatched to the prefectures to oversee the massacres: *“The government initiated the killing operations. They began with a campaign of mobilisation within administrative structures: prefects, sometimes accompanied by a minister, held meetings with burgomasters to instruct them to ‘eliminate the enemy’.”* These crimes, committed during Christmas 1963, have endured in collective memory under the name *“Bloody Christmas.”*

Alarmed, Belgium issued a statement on 7 February 1964: “In light of the accusations levelled against the Rwandan government, it is time, through our embassy, to provide instructions to Belgian nationals in Rwanda regarding how to respond to the extermination of the Tutsi. These massacres are attracting international attention. Belgium must avoid being accused of complicity in this genocide.”

On 1 July 1962, Belgium granted Rwanda nominal independence, swiftly followed by a Constitution on 24 November 1962 that established a regime exclusively reserved for the Hutu. This gave rise to discriminatory laws excluding Tutsi from education and employment. On 17 January 1967, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lazaro Mpakaniye, issued a circular to embassies and international organisations forbidding the employment of Tutsi.

Upon seizing power, Habyarimana adopted a new Constitution on 20 December 1978, drafted by Belgian Filip Reyntjens, which reinforced the policy of excluding Tutsi. In October 1982, Uganda expelled Rwandan refugees, who were then rejected by Rwanda. These injustices, only briefly mentioned here, led to the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the launch of the national liberation struggle.

Belgium, France, and Congo sent troops to fight the RPF. On 1 and 4 October 1990, Habyarimana told the press: “Rather than surrendering a single inch of our land, we shall fight to the last man. The Tutsi seek to restore their past domination over this region. We have nowhere to put them. Let them stop invoking their refugee status. They must take up citizenship wherever they are, in Uganda or Zaire. If they are to come to Rwanda, it should only be for a brief visit to their families.”

The Habyarimana regime demonised the RPF, calling them *Inyangarwanda*, “blood-drinkers”, and “enemies of the nation.” Some Belgian and French officials even refused to acknowledge the RPF fighters as Rwandans.

On 3 February 1991, Admiral Lanxade, Chief of Staff of the French Armed Forces, wrote to President Mitterrand stating that the RPF was made of “Ugandan Tutsi.” On 22 April 1991, he referred to them as “Ugandan Tutsi rebels.”

France supported Habyarimana militarily, while Belgium gave political backing. The Christian Democratic International (IDC) offered active support to the MRND, even in its criminal undertakings. On 17 and 18 January 1991, the IDC hosted an MRND delegation led by Habyarimana’s adviser, Enock Ruhigira, who was received by Prime Minister Wilfried Martens. Alain De Brouwer, IDC political leader, sent them a congratulatory letter on 28 January 1991, and wrote to Belgian Foreign Minister Marc Eyskens, urging cooperation in the fight against the RPF. The MRND then appointed two coordinators for this strategy: Speransiya Karwera Mutwe and Ferdinand Nahimana a central figure in the planning of the genocide and head of RTLM.

On 12 March 1993, André Louis, the secretary general of IDC (*main Belgian political party, L’Internationale Démocrate Chrétienne*), publicly expressed support for Léon Mugesera’s speech inciting the murder of the Tutsi. On 21 January 1993, André Louis had travelled to France to meet with leaders of Mitterrand’s party. They agreed to support the MRND, despite having full knowledge of the genocide being prepared by the Habyarimana regime. Between 19 January and 11 March 1994, Lieutenant Nees, head of Belgian military intelligence at UNAMIR, wrote 29 reports warning of the impending genocide. Yet, on 2 February 1994, Belgium expelled Queen Gicanda, who was receiving medical care in the Belgian city of Nivelles. She returned to Rwanda and was assassinated on 20 April 1994. Also despite this prior information, Tutsi refugees at ETO Kicukiro were abandoned by Belgian UNAMIR peacekeepers on 11 April 1994.

In July 1994, some Belgian parliamentarians travelled to Goma and Bukavu to meet the architects of the genocide. They advised them to form a government and a political party, a plan documented in the paper *Principles for the Prompt Return of Rwandan Refugees* (24 October 1994). It is in this context that the FDLR emerged, which continues to commit genocidal crimes in the region in collusion with the Congolese government and army.

Since 2000, the United Nations has adopted more than 40 resolutions demanding the dismantling of the FDLR. MONUSCO was given this mandate but has never fulfilled it, just as UNAMIR failed in 1993-1994, to prevent the genocide. The European Union has also adopted resolutions calling for the elimination of the FDLR, notably on 10 January 2008 and 8 December 2010. The African Union likewise issued similar resolutions, including at the summit of Heads of State in Libreville on 10 January 2005. It is unacceptable that countries, misled by Belgian disinformation, rush to condemn Rwanda while ignoring the manifest collusion between the DRC and the FDLR.

They invoke international law, but only from a Congolese perspective, ignoring the repeated violations of Rwandan sovereignty and the plight of Congolese Tutsi refugees, who were expelled by the FDLR and have been in exile for 31 years. These refugees are dismissed as “puppets.” This mindset mirrors how, from 1990 to 1994, the Habyarimana regime labelled the RPF as “Ugandan traitors.” It is also reflected in Mitterrand’s statement in July 1994: “In those countries, a genocide is not too important.”

Since July 1994, Belgium remains the only European country where genocide denial against the Tutsi is practised with impunity. Yet no one would dare to deny the Holocaust without consequence. Both genocides, however, hold the same legal status. Today, the reports used to malign Rwanda internationally are authored by self-proclaimed Belgian “experts” who claim to understand the country, despite having taken part in its historical destruction, notably by drafting the Constitutions of 1962 and 1978, and the ethnic laws of the time.

One such individual, Filip Reyntjens, declares on social media that Rwanda must be punished for its “arrogance”. Other countries, such as the United Kingdom, still refuse to extradite or prosecute perpetrators of the genocide.

Your Excellency, Mr President, the forces of destruction unleashed against Rwanda over the past 31 years have been many. Yet they have not defeated us, thanks to the leadership that has united us. Only those who have been through it can truly speak about it (IJORO RIBARA UWARIRAYE).

We know from what place you have lifted Rwanda, a nation abandoned by the international community, and we have witnessed the progress it has registered under your leadership. The bond that unites us is sacred. We will not accept those who destroy our unity, nor those who promote any ideology that would return Rwanda to the dark past. Our right to live, and to choose what is right for us, is inalienable. Those who undermine this right should understand this, and let us be.

Thank you.