

Belgian court hands Neretse 25-year sentence for genocide

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A Belgium court has sentenced Genocide suspect Fabien Neretse, 71, to 25 years in jail.

His trial which started early November came to a close late Thursday night when court found the accused guilty of Genocide, murder, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Belgian prosecutors had initially proposed 30 years in jail for him.

It was the first time in Belgium that criminal prosecution and conviction was based on a law punishing genocide, which was introduced in Belgium in 2017.

Previous trials such as that of two Catholic nuns found guilty in 2001 of participating in the massacre of more than 7,600 people at the Sovu convent in Butare were based on a universal jurisdiction punishing people for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

A Genocide survivor in Belgium who preferred anonymity said : “Justice has been rendered. I am happy.”

The Executive Secretary of Ibuka, Naphtal Ahishakiye, said they applaud the decision by the Belgian court and encourage other jurisdictions where Genocide fugitives reside to borrow a leaf.

“The decision by the Belgian court should, really, be an example to all other [countries] that stand by and watch as Genocide fugitives and Interahamwe roam freely. Like we have often said, these criminals should be arrested and sent to Rwanda for trial or, if not sent to Rwanda, be taken to court in countries where they reside,” Ahishakiye said.

Lawyer : Genocide negationists, deniers lost

Andre Martin Karongozi, a lawyer of the victims told The New Times that Thursday’s judgment and subsequent sentence have a major im-

pact, especially as a strong message was sent to Genocide fugitives and deniers as well as Rwanda haters in the country and elsewhere.

Karongozi said that throughout the trial, defence lawyers used negationist texts, Genocide deniers such as Joseph Matata, Judi Rever, Johann Swinnen, former Belgian Ambassador to Rwanda (1990-1994), and others, as witnesses, but all was in vain.

“All these are people who have been attending Genocide denial meetings along with the likes of Faustin Twagiramungu and Filip Reyntjens. For them, this trial was not simply a trial for Neretse. It was a trial for all Genocide negationists and deniers and, therefore, they have all lost the case,” Karongozi said.

Karongozi noted that during the final phase of the trial, the Prosecutor stressed that Belgium cannot be allowed to be a safe haven for Inter-

ahamwe and genocide fugitives.

“The Prosecutor clearly noted that even though old and sick, Neretse is spreading the Genocide ideology to the young generation”.

They can run but will eventually face justice

Genocide researcher Tom Ndahiro said : “The message is clear to genocide fugitives. They can run, hide, change identity, deny what they did, but eventually, some of them will have to face justice for the sake of humanity”.

“I wish all countries which harbour Genocide fugitives can do more. The trial and conviction of Fabien Neretse is a fight against impunity. I wish the United Kingdom can pick a lesson from Belgium.”

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