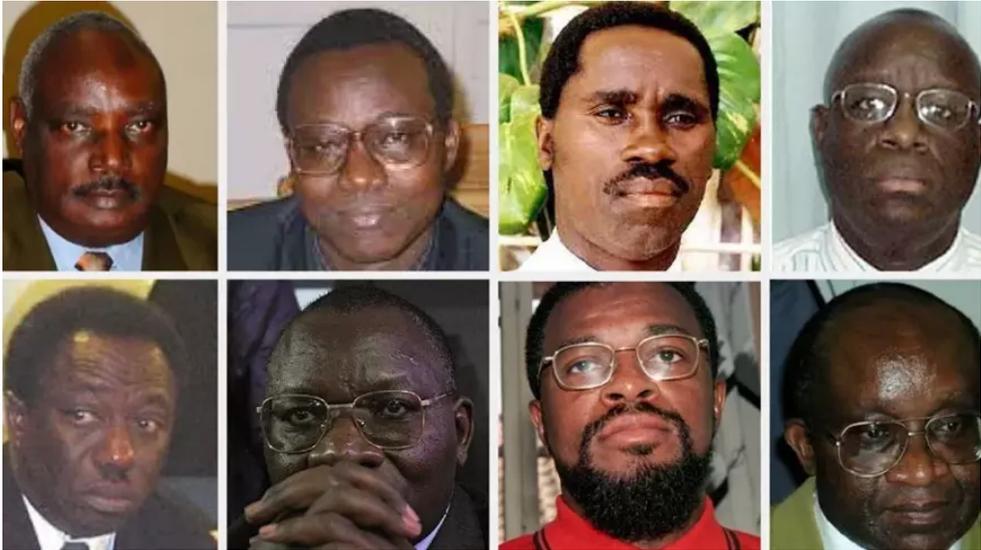


Niger expels Genocide convicts transferred by UN Court

Alice Kagina

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The men are widely considered to be among the masterminds of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.



The Republic of Niger has expelled eight Rwandans who were transferred by the UN Court which tried them for Genocide related crimes.

The men were convicted of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi and had completed their sentences or were acquitted.

According to a statement released on December 27, 2021, the Niger Ministry of Interior and Decentralization ordered the men to leave the country within seven days.

The ex-convicts are Protais Zigiranyirazo, Francois Nzuwonemeye, Innocent Sagahutu, Alphonse Nteziryayo, Tharcisse Muvunyi, André Ntagerura, Anatole Nsengiyumva and Prosper Mugiraneza.

The men are widely considered to be among the masterminds of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

After the conclusion of their cases, they remained in Arusha, Tanzania where the UN court was based.

The expulsion comes after an inquiry made by the government of Rwanda to the UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) seeking clarification about circumstances under which the eight were transferred to Niger.

While addressing a UN Security Council meeting in New York in early December, Valentine Rugwabiza, Rwanda's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said that Rwanda had not been informed by either the MICT or the host country about the transfer of these Rwandan nationals.

She then pointed out that there is evidence that some of these individuals, after their acquittal by the former ICTR, have been engaging in subversive activities that contributed to the insecurity and instability of the Great Lakes Region for the past decades.

The individuals in question had for long been stuck in Arusha, the former seat of the ICTR, after many countries had refused to take them in, including those hosting their families.

However, Rwanda previously said they may come back home to their country if they so wish.

Who are the ex-convicts ?

Zigiranyirazo is the brother-in-law of former President Juvenal Habyarimana and was a very influential member of 'Akazu' group was acquitted in 2009.

Nzuwonemeye and Sagahutu were the commander and second in command of Reconnaissance Battalion respectively, were both accused of genocide charges and murder against humanity including the murder of then prime minister Agathe Uwilingyimana. Nzuwonemeye was acquitted and Sagahutu's sentence was downgraded from 20 to 15 years.

Nteziryayo, the former Prefect of Butare was accused of training, and arming the militia, and mobilizing the population in his prefecture to murder the Tutsi, his sentence was as well reduced to 25 years in prison after appeal.

Muvunyi, in 2010, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide and other inhumane acts.

Ntagerura, the former transport minister, accused of genocide and crimes against humanity was also acquitted in 2004.

Nsengiyumva, the former army commander in Gisenyi in April 1994, whose sentence was downgraded to 15 years in 2011 when he was 61 years old, walked out freely as deemed to have already served the necessary time in prison.

Prosper Mugiraneza, ex-public service minister, was initially convicted for conspiracy to commit genocide and given a 30-year sentence until he was acquitted in 2013.

Some of the ICTR acquitted have found host countries like Former mayors Ignace Bagilishema and Jean Mpambara who live in France, former Minister of Education André Rwamakuba who lives in Switzerland, and former préfet Emmanuel Bagambiki living in Belgium, among others.

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