

Genocide survivors ‘cannot wait’ to see Kabuga in dock

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The New Times, November 10, 2020

As Genocide suspect Félicien Kabuga makes an initial appearance before the UN court in The Netherlands on Wednesday, November 11, survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, which he helped orchestrate, have told The New Times that they cannot wait to see justice served.

Kabuga’s initial court appearance was announced on Monday, November 9, by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (Mechanism).

Jean Damascene Ntivuguruzwa, 54, who survived from Mugina Sector, in Kamonyi District, wants to see Kabuga “held accountable for the machetes he imported into Rwanda that were used to kill our loved ones.”

Very close to the genocidal regime president Juvénal Habyarimana (one of Kabuga’s daughters is married to the former president’s son), Kabuga financed large purchases of crude weapons including machetes

which were used by the killers during the Genocide.

During months preceding the Genocide, the businessman imported more than half a million of dollars’ worth of machetes, according to available records.

Kabuga was the President of the so-called National Defence Fund from about April 25, 1994 to July 1994 and the founding president of the team that founded the hate radio RTLM, known to be a key enabler of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

The radio gave, regularly, detailed information about the people to be massacred and where to find them.

Kabuga is charged with genocide, complicity in genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, and extermination and persecution as crimes against humanity, in respect of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Ntivuguruzwa says he is aware the innocent lives lost cannot be equated to any amount of money. But, he noted, he would also like to see Kabuga compelled to pay reparations to all survivors of the Genocide.

And, thirdly, Ntivuguruzwa said, the genocidaire "should give information regarding his accomplices and the network that helped him evade justice all these years."

"I also want him to plead guilty, without so much difficulty, for his crimes because denying will only hurt us twice."

Egide Mutabazi, 44, a survivor of the massacres against the Tutsi in the present Winteko Sector of Rusizi District said : "What I want is just justice to be given, both to him as a suspect, but most importantly, to survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

"We have waited a long time for Kabuga to be arrested and judged. We can't wait to see the outcome of this important trial."

Kabuga is in the custody of the Mechanism in The Hague since October 26 when he was transferred from France.

A statement by the presiding judge of the Trial Chamber of the Mechanism, Iain Bonomy, who is also the pre-trial judge in this case says Kabuga will be allowed to either participate in the initial appearance in-person in the courtroom or via video-conference.

The alleged genocide architect was arrested in May by French authorities on an international warrant for crimes related to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi after 26 years on the run.

After his arrest, Kabuga contested his extradition before the French courts, and on September 30, 2020, the French Cour de cassation rejected his appeal and authorised his transfer to the Mechanism's custody.

Following that decision, Kabuga filed an urgent motion on October 5, 2020 requesting that his arrest warrant and order for transfer be amended to provide for his transfer to the Hague branch of the Mechanism rather than the Arusha branch, citing in particular his medical conditions and the health risks associated with travel.

Both the Office of the Prosecutor and the Registrar of the Mechanism supported the request for Kabuga to be temporarily transferred to The Hague.

On October 21, 2020, Judge Iain Bonomy amended the arrest warrant and order for transfer to allow for Kabuga's transfer to the UN detention unit at the Hague branch of the Mechanism.

He was transferred to the Hague branch of the Mechanism on October 26.

Kabuga's case will be heard by a Trial Chamber composed of Judge

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