

Tributes pour in for justice campaigner Dafroza Gauthier

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Rwandans, government officials and various organisations sent tributes to Dafroza Mukarumongi Gauthier, a prominent campaigner for justice for victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, who died in France on Saturday, October 3.



Dafroza Mukarumongi Gauthier, a prominent campaigner for justice for victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, who died in France on Saturday, October 3. Courtesy

Gauthier, who died at 72, had dedicated decades to helping survivors pursue justice

against people accused of taking part in the Genocide.

Her work earned her national recognition in 2017 when President Paul Kagame awarded her and her husband, Alain Gauthier, the Igihango national honour for their contribution to bringing Genocide suspects to justice. The couple did their work the organisation they founded called the Collectif des parties civiles pour le Rwanda (CPCR).

Organisations that worked alongside the Gauthiers described her as a determined advocate who refused to allow victims and survivors to be forgotten.

Aegis Trust, an organisation involved in the preservation of Genocide memory, said Dafroza Gauthier had spent decades standing with survivors and bringing Genocide perpetrators to justice.

“She stood beside survivors, refused to let silence win, and pursued justice for those who thought they could escape it,” the organization said in a statement.

“We were honoured to stand alongside her in that fight. Her courage will not be forgotten, and her legacy lives on in everyone who

keeps going.”

The Rwandan Community of France, which she previously led, said her contribution had left them with a responsibility to continue the work she championed.

“Her passing compels us to carry on her fight,” said Christophe Renzaho, president of the community, adding that *“memory must be passed on”* and *“truth must be defended.”*

The Rwandan embassy in France also paid tribute to Gauthier, saying her and her husband’s commitment to Rwanda and justice had left a lasting mark on the country’s collective memory.

“Their work helped bring to light genocidaires who had been living with impunity in France and other European countries, and enabled several of them to finally be brought to justice and convicted,” the embassy said.

“Through her courage, determination, and dedication, Dafroza Gauthier helped ensure the voices of survivors were heard and defended the memory of the genocide’s victims,” the embassy said, describing her death as *“a great loss for Rwanda.”*

The association of Genocide survivors Ibuka said Gauthier’s work had helped advance the pursuit of justice for perpetrators of the Genocide against the Tutsi, describing her as a woman whose fight would live on.

Jean-Damascène Bizimana, the Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement, said Dafroza Gauthier’s work gave survivors greater capacity to seek justice for the destruction of their families.

He said the CPCR helped ensure that people accused of Genocide crimes who had fled to France could not avoid accountability.

“Some of these perpetrators have already been sentenced by French courts, and every individual brought to trial was found guilty of their crimes,” Bizimana said.

He described the pursuit of accountability for the Genocide against the Tutsi as one of Gauthier’s defining achievements.

“The fight for justice, ensuring accountability for the crime of the Genocide against the Tutsi, is a crowning achievement,” he said.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Olivier Nduhungerehe, said Gauthier’s contribution extended beyond Rwanda and would continue to influence how future generations remember the pursuit of justice.

“A tremendous loss for Rwanda, for Justice, and for all of humanity,” Nduhungerehe said, describing her legacy as *“a source of pride for the current generation and an inspiration for future generations.”*

Rwanda’s Ambassador to the United States, Mathilde Mukantabana, recognized Gauthier’s role in confronting denial of the Genocide.

“She challenged denial and demanded justice,” Mukantabana said, adding that the Gauthiers had worked to ensure Genocide perpetrators could not *“rest in impunity.”*

Ambassador Martin Ngoga, Rwanda’s Permanent Representative to the UN, recognized Dafroza Gauthier for pushing through the challenges during their campaign to bring genocidaires to book.

“Together with her husband Alain, they confronted many challenges in a complicated terrain with unrelenting determination,” Ngoga said.

Eric Murangwa, a Genocide survivor and founder of the Ishami Foundation, said Gauthier's work was rooted in accountability for victims and survivors.

He described her as “*a courageous survivor*” who dedicated her life to truth and justice.

Doris Picard Uwicyeza, Rwanda Governance Board chief executive, also highlighted the personal commitment behind Gauthier's work, describing her as a survivor who devoted her life to ensuring that victims were not forgotten.

The Gauthiers founded the CPCR in 2001 after returning to Rwanda in the aftermath

of the Genocide and beginning to gather testimonies from survivors.

The organisation compiled evidence and case files for French authorities, contributing to the prosecution of people suspected of participating in the Genocide who were living in France.

Among the cases was that of Eugène Rwamucyo, who was sentenced to 27 years in prison for complicity in genocide and crimes against humanity in 2024.

Gauthier also took part in efforts to teach younger generations about Genocide history and challenge denial through engagements with schools and universities.