

Ohio man accused of lying about his Rwanda genocide past: What we know about Eric Nshimiye

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Eric Tabaro Nshimiye has been living a successful and quiet life in Northeast Ohio for more than 20 years.

He and his wife bought a home in Stark County's Lake Township just south of the Uniontown area in 2003 and raised their family there. Neighbors in the Billingham Avenue NW area describe Nshimiye as friendly and helpful, someone who went out of his way to invite them to children's graduation parties and offer mowing help.

But federal investigators say the native of Rwanda has been hiding a dark secret and lying about his past. They have accused Nshimiye of being a notorious perpetrator of rape and genocide in Rwanda in 1994 while he was a medical student there.

What was the Rwandan genocide?

The Rwandan genocide happened over about 100 days when the ethnic majority Hutus killed members of the minority Tutsis. About 800,000 people were killed.

At that time, the country had significant ethnic division: About 85% of its population were Hutus, and about 14% were Tutsis.

Here's what we know about about Eric Tabaro Nshimiye's arrest

The U.S. Department of Justice arrested Nshimiye on Thursday at his Stark County home.

His federal charges include obstruction of justice and offering false testimony in the 2019 Boston trial of his former classmate and now-convicted Rwandan genocide perpetrator Jean Leonard Teganya.

"For nearly 30 years, Mr. Nshimiye allegedly hid the truth about crimes he committed during the Rwandan genocide in order to seek refuge in the United States, and reap the benefits of U.S. citizenship," acting U.S. Attorney Joshua S. Levy in Boston said in a statement. *"The United States will not be a safe haven for suspected human rights viola-*

tors and war criminals.”

A man and woman who answered the door at the Nshimiye home declined to comment when reached Thursday by a Canton Repository reporter.

What’s next in the case?

Nshimiye, also known as Eric Tabaro Nshimiyimana, was being held in the Mahoning County Jail awaiting extradition to federal court in Boston, where his charges will be handled.

Court hearings are scheduled for Friday before federal Magistrate Judge Carmen E. Henderson in Youngstown. A public defender appointed to represent Nshimiye did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

If convicted, Nshimiye could face up to 20 years in prison and \$750,000 in fines.

What is Eric Tabaro Nshimiye accused of?

Court documents said Nshimiye was a medical student at the University of Rwanda in Butare, Rwanda, in the early 1990s.

He and his classmate Teganya were “well-known student members” of the ruling Hutu-dominated party that incited the genocide, the MRND political party, and the Interahamwe, the notoriously violent youth wing of that movement, court records said.

Court documents accuse Nshimiye of being part of the genocide, killing Tutsi men, women and children by striking them on the

head with a nail-studded club and then hacking them to death with a machete.

Nshimiye’s is specifically accused of killing a 14-year-old boy and a man who sewed doctors’ coats at the university hospital. Witnesses in Rwanda recently identified the locations of the killings and drew pictures of Nshimiye’s weapons, court documents said.

”Nshimiye both participated in and aided and abetted the rape of numerous Tutsi women during the genocide,” court documents said.

What are Nshimiye’s neighbors saying?

Those who live on his street expressed shock about the federal allegations.

The neighborhood children played soccer in the Nshimiyes’ yard. Nshimiye was known to mow the grass of his elderly next-door neighbors and help one of them in his wheelchair get onto the driveway from his porch.

”That is not the person I know,” said a woman who met Nshimiye when she and her family moved into the neighborhood 12 years ago. ”The person we know is a family man. He’s not a violent person. Our children (who are friends of his children) have spent the night at his house. That’s not the person I know.”

How did Nshimiye wind up in Northeast Ohio? Why was he charged now?

Nshimiye fled Rwanda in the summer of 1994, after attacking Tutsi rebel group. He made his way to Kenya where, in 1995, he is accused of lying to U.S. immigration officials to gain admission to the United States as a refugee, court documents said.

From there, Nshimiye landed in Ohio, where he has lived since 1995. He attended the University of Dayton and received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, according to his LinkedIn page.

He has worked as an engineer at Goodyear for 23 years. His work took him to many other countries, including Thailand, South Africa and China, according to his LinkedIn page. Goodyear has not responded to a request for comment.

Court documents said he provided false information about his involvement in the Rwandan genocide to obtain lawful permanent residence and ultimately U.S. citizenship.

In 2017, U.S. federal officials charged Nshimiye's former classmate Teganya with fraudulently seeking asylum in the United States by concealing his membership in the MRND and his involvement in the genocide.

During Teganya's trial, Nshimiye testified that neither he nor Teganya participated in the genocide. Teganya was later convicted of two counts of immigration fraud and three counts of perjury in April 2019.

Federal officials later turned their focus to Nshimiye.