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## Rwandan genocide priest surrenders


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Up to 800,000 people were killed by militias

**By the BBC's Helen Vesperini in Kigali**

A Rwandan Roman Catholic priest wanted on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity has given himself up to the international tribunal for Rwanda based in the Tanzanian town of Arusha.

Athanase Seromba, who had been living in Italy sheltered by the Catholic Church for the past five years, was placed in detention when he arrived in Arusha on Wednesday night.

Human rights associations say he was behind one of the most horrifying incidents in the Rwandan genocide - the destruction by bulldozers of the church at Nyange and the 2,000 Tutsis who had taken refuge inside it.

African Rights Watch says that Father Seromba worked tirelessly at organising the genocide, encouraging Tutsis to take refuge at the parish of Nyange and then bringing militiamen and civilians to attack them.

### Hiding

On the third day of the attacks, the killers were frustrated because they were not able to reach those who had barricaded themselves inside the church, and so Father Seromba allegedly organised and paid for the demolition of the church by bulldozers.

The prosecutor of the Arusha tribunal, Carla del Ponte, tried to have Father Seromba extradited on 12 July last year.

But the Italian Government refused to co-operate.

The next day, the church authorities helped the priest to go into hiding at an unknown location in Tuscany.

African Rights Watch has published a list of 17 people ready to testify against Father Seromba.

The list includes the driver of one of the two bulldozers that demolished the church.

The driver has been in prison for his role in the massacre since 1995 and has consistently pointed an accusing finger at Father Seromba.

The priest denies all charges, saying he had already left Nyange when the massacres took place.



Del Ponte criticised the church's actions

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"African Rights Watch says that Father Seromba worked tirelessly at organising the genocide"

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## Rwanda's genocide tribunal on trial



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At least 800,000 Rwandans died in the genocide

**By Helen Vesperini in Kigali**

Carla Del Ponte, the woman who took on the Mafia and Switzerland's financial institutions, is now applying herself to the Herculean task of making the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda less inefficient.

In the seven years since its creation, the tribunal, which judges the organisers of the 1994 Rwandan genocide has judged just nine cases, handing down eight convictions and one acquittal.

An estimated 800,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were killed in three months.

A further 15 suspects are currently being tried and another 31 are awaiting trial at the detention facility in Arusha, Tanzania.

“  
It's better than nothing, but one verdict a year is on the slow side  
”

Rwandan man

The Rwandan Government recognises that Ms Del Ponte has made some progress in the right direction, but still thinks the tribunal could do better.

### Inefficient

President Paul Kagame in a recent interview said: "Given the resources at its disposal and given so far the cases that have been concluded, one can say they're doing relatively less than is otherwise demanded by the situation or should be expected."

But he was quick to add: "But the existence of the tribunal itself in my view is very important", and he suggested those responsible for running the tribunal should do their best to make it more efficient.

Some Rwandan officials not directly concerned with justice, say the tribunal has functioned so slowly that they long ago ceased to take any interest in it.

"It's just another UN agency - it works too slowly," one official said.

### Scandals

Rwandan courts in the period from December 1996 to June 2001 judged almost 6,000 genocide suspects, according to a branch of Liprodhor, a human rights group that monitors genocide trials.

Justice Minister Mucyo, during a recent trip to the United States, asked the United Nations' Security Council to transfer the tribunal to Rwanda.

One thing Ms Del Ponte has done is to try to weed out incompetence among tribunal staff.

She declined to renew the contracts of a group of staff members earlier this year on the grounds they were incompetent and refused to waver when those fired accused her of racial discrimination.

The tribunal hit the headlines again when it was discovered that genocide suspects were working alongside defence teams.

Other scandals have also dogged the tribunal - allegations that some detainees are running web sites and that others are wrongfully declaring themselves insolvent in order to benefit from defence counsel paid for by the taxpayer.

### Testimony

Another recent problem has been with the treatment of witnesses in court.

Survivors of Rwanda's genocide tend to find testifying a traumatic experience at the best of times.

One Rwandan witness recently accused a tribunal judge of getting rich on the back of the suffering of survivors.

Ordinary Rwandans tend to feel removed from the tribunal, although the tribunal has done its best to make the information centre at its Kigali headquarters more accessible.

### Slow work

"It's better than nothing, but one verdict a year is on the slow side," one man said.

Many who do try to follow the workings of the tribunal are baffled at the time and resources spent on defending people against whom they see overwhelming evidence of guilt.

The fact that the tribunal can hand down a maximum of a life sentence, even in the case of the masterminds of the genocide, is also beyond the comprehension of many Rwandans who see their own courts handing down the death sentence to lesser criminals.

"There's nothing complicated about it," said a Kigali student called Jules.

"They know that as long as a case drags on they're still in a job, and obviously it's a well-paid job."



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Carla del Ponte: No nonsense approach



Ex-Rwanda PM Jean Kambanda - the first head of government convicted for genocide



Rwanda PM Paul Kagame: Critical of the tribunal but welcomes its existence

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An estimated 800,000 Rwandans died in the genocide

The United Nations court looking into the Rwandan genocide handed down a not guilty verdict for the first time on Thursday.

Ignace Bagilishema, formerly mayor of Mabanza commune in western Rwanda, was accused of being instrumental in the murder of 45,000 Tutsis.

The judges said that the prosecution failed to provide enough convincing evidence.

The Rwandan Government said it is shocked by the acquittal of Mr Bagilishema, who it described as one of the most "notorious" criminals from the genocide.

Reading the judgement, Norwegian Judge Erik Mose spoke of the "paucity" of the evidence against Mr Bagilishema, and said that the testimonies of many of the witnesses presented against him were contradictory and unreliable.

By a majority of two to one, the panel of three judges found that there was insufficient evidence to support any of the seven charges against Mr Bagilishema.

**'Tutsi defender'**

Throughout the trial, Mr Bagilishema had always maintained that he had tried to protect Tutsis, but had not been able to prevent all the attacks.

He was presented by his defence team as a good mayor dedicated to peaceful co-existence of Hutus and Tutsis.

The prosecutor has already said that he intends to appeal against the acquittal, and has also requested that the tribunal keep Mr Bagilishema in custody for another 30 days, in case he flees or poses a threat to witnesses.

The tribunal's normal procedure is for acquitted suspects to be released immediately.



The slaughter in Rwanda shocked the world

The tribunal has been sitting in Arusha, Tanzania since November 1994 to look into the genocide that left about 800,000 people dead.

There is frustration in Rwanda at how slow the Arusha process has been. The tribunal has found only eight people guilty so far.

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**Investigator faces genocide charges**



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The government suspects many at the ICTR

One of the former employees of the United Nations tribunal which is investigating the 1994 genocide in Rwanda is himself being accused of involvement in the massacres.

Belgian police arrested Joseph Nzabirinda on Friday on four charges of genocide, complicity in genocide, crimes against humanity, extermination and rape, the tribunal said.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) accuses Mr Nzabirinda, then a youth leader, of helping to kill thousands of ethnic Tutsis in the southern province of Butare.

In particular, he is accused of being involved in the massacre of Tutsis who sought refuge in the hills near the town of Ngoma, and of the rape of three women.

The tribunal says he was working with the mayor of Ngoma commune, Joseph Kanyabashi, who is already on trial before the ICTR.

Mr Nzabirinda, 44, has been working for the ICTR, based in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha, as an investigator for the defence team of Sylvain Nsabimana, former prefect of Butare, who is on trial with Mr Kanyabashi.

**Suspicious**

Rwanda's Government said earlier this month that many investigators at the tribunal were suspected of involvement in the genocide and asked the ICTR to act.

It has also accused the tribunal of inefficiency.

President Paul Kagame in a recent interview said: "Given the resources at its disposal and given so far the cases that have been concluded, one can say they're doing relatively less than is otherwise demanded by the situation or should be expected."

Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, the spokesperson for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, told a BBC News Online Forum earlier this week that all investigators suspected of involvement in the massacres have now been expelled from the process.

An estimated 800,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were killed in three months during the 1994 slaughters.



Rwanda President Paul Kagame says the tribunal is inefficient



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**Genocide convicts sent to Mali**



At least 800,000 Rwandans died in the genocide

**By David Lewis in Tanzania**

The first six prisoners to have been convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda have arrived in Mali where they will be serving out their sentences.

Amongst the six former senior officials are Jean Kambanda, the former prime minister and head of the Rwandan Government and Jean-Paul Akayesu, former mayor of the Rwandan town of Taba.

All of the convicts lost their appeals and will serve their sentences in a specially modified jail in the Malian capital, Bamako.

The prisoners will complete their terms in the west African country and, while they will be held under Malian law, the International Criminal Tribunal will supervise the sentences.

**New phase**

According to Kingsley Moghalu, spokesman for the UN tribunal, the security situation and standards of jails in Rwanda meant that the convicted could not serve their sentences in the country where the crimes were committed.

However, he did not rule out the possibility of future convicts being sent back to Rwanda.

The tribunal has been criticised in the past for its lengthy and costly system of trying those accused of crimes against humanity in Rwanda.

However, Mr Moghalu told me that this latest move represented a new phase that will see those that took part in the 1994 genocide punished for their acts.

**Deterrence**

Mr Moghalu told me that he felt that this was a historic move in the creation of a culture of accountability amongst those in Africa that, up until now, had considered themselves untouchable.

Apart from increasing public attention and support for the trials, he feels that these convictions will act as strong deterrents in the future.

The tribunal in Arusha made history in 1998 when it made the first judgement by an international court for the crime of genocide and Mr Kabanda became the first head of government to be punished for genocide.

The process is indeed long and there are still some 20 accused at large but there is a sense that justice is at last, being done.



The slaughter in Rwanda shocked the world



Sister Julienne Kisito is accused of aiding the genocide

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## Rwanda priest leaves Italy for tribunal



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Father Seromba was based in Florence from 1997

A Rwandan Catholic priest has left Italy to face genocide charges at the war crimes tribunal in Tanzania, officials have said.

Father Athanase Seromba has been sheltering in the diocese of Florence since 1997 despite calls for him to be handed over.

"Father Athanase, who has always affirmed his innocence, wanted to go to the tribunal with the intention of demonstrating his innocence before the law," the diocese said.

It said that Interpol officers would escort him to the tribunal building for his own safety.

### Massacre allegations

According to the London-based human rights organisation African Rights, Father Seromba - who is a Hutu - is responsible for a notorious massacre at his church in Nyange in 1994.

Survivors claim that the priest helped to herd people into his church before ordering the building to be bulldozed to the ground.

The group says Father Seromba left behind mass graves filled with more than 2,000 bodies.

Father Seromba was moved to Italy soon afterwards to study.



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## Rwandan priest fights extradition


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Emmanuel Rukundo is accused of crimes against humanity

**By Emma Jane Kirby in Geneva**

A Rwandan priest who was arrested in Geneva on genocide charges last week has appealed to a federal court in Switzerland to block his extradition to a United Nations war crimes tribunal.

Emmanuel Rukundo, a former Rwandan army chaplain, is due to be extradited to Arusha, Tanzania, at the request of the UN war crimes prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte.

Mr Rukundo was working as a priest in a Geneva parish when he was arrested last week on suspicion of being involved in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, in which extremist Hutus massacred an estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

According to the charges, the 42-year-old priest compiled lists of Tutsis for killing and called for their extermination while he was working as an army preacher.

Mr Rukundo faces formal charges of genocide, complicity in genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide and crimes against humanity - but he denies all four charges.

### Fair trial demanded

His lawyer, Nicolas Jeandin, said on Wednesday that he had appealed to the Swiss Federal Court against Mr Rukundo's extradition, on the grounds that Mr Rukundo would not be guaranteed a fair trial in Tanzania.

He added that Mr Rukundo had witnesses to prove that he was not involved with the massacres.

The Swiss military justice system first began investigating Rukundo's links with the Rwandan genocide in 1999.

But his transfer to the UN tribunal is almost certain to be delayed, as the Swiss court is expected to take several months to issue its ruling in the case.



Carla del Ponte demanded Mr Rukundo's extradition



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**Rwanda tribunal staff dismissed**



Switzerland arrested a Rwandan priest last week  
 In an embarrassing blow to the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, four of its defence investigators have been found to be suspects in the 1994 genocide.

The employment contracts of three of the four, which expired in June, will not be renewed, said Adama Dieng, a registrar at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Augustin Basebaya, Aloys Ngendahimana and Augustin Karera are listed as "category one" suspects, for allegedly participating in massacre of minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Thaddee Kwitonda, whose contract has been suspended, is under investigation by the tribunal for crimes allegedly committed during the genocide, the registrar said in a statement.



About 800,000 people died in the 1994 genocide

**Approved by the tribunal**

The four investigators, who were hired to help the defence teams prepare their cases, were approved for employment by the tribunal, which paid their wages.

It was not clear whether any further action would be taken against them.

"The tribunal makes no presumption of the guilt of these individuals for the crimes of which they are suspected or accused," the statement said.

"The tribunal stands ready to reconsider them for clearance for employment by any defence counsel in the tribunal should they be cleared of the charges and suspicions against them in the Rwandan judicial system or in the international tribunal."

**Italy 'hides' wanted priest**

In a related case, a Rwandan priest wanted by the tribunal on charges of genocide, is reportedly being hidden by Italy's Roman Catholic church.

Father Athanase Seromba has been accused of murdering more than 2,000 people during the three-month massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda in 1994.

He was scheduled to give a sermon explaining why he was wanted by the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, but he vanished hours earlier.

Parishioners, who had packed the San Mauro a Signa church to hear his defence, learned he had gone into hiding at a secret location.

The Italian Government has so far refused the ICTR's request to hand Father Seromba over to be tried at the UN court in Arusha, Tanzania.

The Vatican, in a formal statement, referred to a letter from the Pope to Rwandans in 1996, which said the Church could not be held responsible for the misdeeds of individual members.

**Accused**

According to the London-based human rights organisation African Rights, Father Seromba - who is a Hutu - is responsible for a notorious massacre at his church in Nyange.

Survivors say that the priest helped to herd people into his church before ordering the building to be bulldozed to the ground.

He was moved to Italy soon afterwards to study, and began serving in San Mauro 18 months ago.

Last week, three Rwandans were arrested in Switzerland, Holland and Belgium in connection with the genocide and were to be transferred to the tribunal in Arusha.

Belgium court officials have said that the former Rwandan Finance Minister, Emmanuel Ndindabahizi, who was arrested in Belgium last week, has been ordered to stay in jail pending his transfer to the tribunal.

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**Church 'hides' Rwandan priest in Italy**



Switzerland arrested a Rwandan priest last week  
 A Rwandan priest wanted by a UN war crimes tribunal to face charges of genocide is in hiding in Italy.

The Roman Catholic church authorities in Florence have denied obstructing his arrest.

They say the priest has simply gone to an unspecified address in the city to escape the attention of reporters.

Father Athanase Seromba has been accused of the murder of more than 2,000 people during the three-month massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda in 1994.

Father Seromba had promised to explain in a sermon why the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda had sought last week to extradite him from Italy to face charges of genocide.

But he vanished hours before he was due to celebrate mass in a church outside Florence.

The Italian Government has so far refused the ICTR's request to hand Father Seromba over to be tried at the UN court in Arusha, Tanzania.

Parishioners, who had packed the San Mauro a Signa church to hear Father Seromba's defence, learned he had gone into hiding at a secret location.

**Accused**

According to the London-based human rights organisation African Rights, Father Seromba - who is a Hutu - is responsible for a notorious massacre at his church in Nyange.

Survivors claim that the priest helped to herd people into his church before ordering the building to be bulldozed to the ground.

Father Seromba was moved to Italy soon afterwards to study, and he began serving in San Mauro 18 months ago.

Last week, three Rwandans were arrested in Switzerland, Belgium and Holland in connection with the genocide and were to be transferred to the UN war crimes tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania.

However, chief UN war crimes chief-prosecutor, Carla del Ponte, said there should have been a fourth arrest in Italy, but that the Italian authorities had decided to postpone the arrest saying there was no legal basis.

Rwandan Justice Minister Jean de Dieu Mucyo expressed thanks for the countries who did co-operate and called on other countries harbouring Rwandan genocide suspects "to do as much".



About 800,000 people died in the 1994 genocide



Carla del Ponte: Unhappy with Italy

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The prisoners are accused of crimes against humanity

Three Rwandan men, including an ex-minister, have been arrested in Europe in connection to the 1994 Rwandan genocide and are to be transferred to the UN war crimes tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania.

During a press conference in Geneva, the chief UN war crimes chief-prosecutor, Carla del Ponte, welcomed the speedy arrests of a former Rwandan minister in Switzerland, a former military chaplain in Belgium, and a Rwandan musician in Holland.

The three men are charged separately with genocide, complicity in genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, and crimes against humanity.

Their extradition will bring to 50 the number of people in the tribunal's custody.

**Belgium arrests minister**

The former minister, Emmanuel Ndindabahizi, 51, was arrested by police in an early morning raid on his home in the eastern Belgian town of Verviers.

Mr Ndindabahizi was finance minister in Rwanda from April to July 1994, during the massacre of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates.

Officials said that he had applied for asylum in Belgium, but was turned down and will remain in custody until his transfer to Arusha within three months.

**Switzerland arrests priest**

In Switzerland, the authorities arrested a former Rwandan army chaplain sought for similar charges.

A spokesman for the tribunal, Kingsley Moghalu, detailed the accusations against Emmanuel Rekundo, an ordained Catholic priest who is believed to have arrived in Switzerland in 1999.

"He is accused of crimes in Kabgayi, he visited a seminary there and a school where he was always escorted by soldiers and Interahamwe (militia) while allegedly hunting down Tutsi refugees and killing them," Mr Moghalu was quoted as saying by the AP news agency.

"He ordered the killing of a Tutsi priest, who was a colleague, and participated in denunciation campaigns," he added.

Mr Rukundo, 42, has the right to appeal the extradition decision to the Swiss Federal Tribunal, Switzerland's highest court.

**Holland arrests musician**

Simon Bikindi, a Rwandan musician, was arrested by Dutch police in the city of Leiden.

A human rights group that has investigated the genocide, African Rights, says Mr Bikindi wrote songs and poems that incited against Tutsis.

Mrs del Ponte said there should have been a fourth arrest in Italy, but that the Italian authorities have decided to postpone the arrest saying there was no legal basis.

Visibly angry at the Italian decision, Mrs del Ponte said she hoped Italy would learn how to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal:

"I am surprised and stupefied, because apparently Italy doesn't know that the obligation to execute our arrest warrant is an international obligation without need of an internal law.

"In the light of the charges brought against the accused I fervently hope that Italy will prove itself able to meet its responsibilities and that it will agree to co-operate with the ICTR."



Carla del Ponte: Welcomes the arrests

"I am surprised and stupefied, because apparently Italy doesn't know that the obligation to execute our arrest warrant is an international obligation without need of an internal law

Carla del Ponte



About 800,000 are estimated to have been killed

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**Rwandan priest silent on massacre allegations**[Africa](#)[Americas](#)[Asia-Pacific](#)[Europe](#)[Middle East](#)[South Asia](#)[From Our Own Correspondent](#)  
African Rights has urged an investigation[Letter From America](#)  
A Rwandan priest now working in Italy has refused to comment on allegations that he caused 2,000 deaths when a church was bulldozed during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.[UK Politics](#)  
The human rights organisation African Rights this week called on the Italian Government to investigate the accusations against the Roman Catholic priest, Father Athanase Seromba.[Sport](#)  
African Rights says it has testimony from 17 eyewitnesses naming Father Seromba as the priest who ordered the bulldozing of his church in Nyange parish.[Talking Point](#)  
More than 2,000 people, most of them Tutsi, had sought shelter in the church during the genocide.[In Depth](#)[AudioVideo](#)

When a BBC correspondent tracked Father Seromba down at a house in Florence he remained silent as the correspondent put the accusations to him. He eventually shut the door without a word.

When the allegations first emerged at the weekend, Father Seromba said he had left Rwanda before the genocide.

### Supportive

Father Giovanni Conti, parish priest where Father Seromba is working, was shocked by the allegations and remains supportive of the Rwandan priest.

"We had absolutely no reason to think any thing bad about him. He was such a calm and serene person."

Bernardo Cevallera, Director of Fides, the international Catholic news agency, told the BBC there was not much he could say in response to the allegations.

"We should try to listen to the voice of this priest who is well known by other Rwandan and Italian priests, and they say he is a very good priest, very committed to pastoral work," he said.

### Witnesses

Witnesses whose testimonies have been obtained by African Rights include former employees of Father Seromba, a former policeman and other local officials, plus seven people who survived the massacre in the priest's Nyange parish.

African Rights accuses Father Seromba of:

- organising and assisting the killings in Nyange
- shooting refugees
- arranging and paying for the church to be bulldozed
- handing survivors over to the killers to be murdered
- manning a roadblock so that Tutsis could be singled out and killed

African Rights has urged the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda "to act urgently" in the case of Father Seromba, and has called on the Vatican to investigate the allegations.

But Bernardo Cevallera told the BBC: "The church does not have the duty of investigating - it has the duty of building up a new Rwandan society."

African Rights director Rakiya Omaar said the group had raised the case in a 10-page letter to the Pope last year, but said it had been "summarily dismissed".

Ealier this year the Catholic church made known its opposition to the trial in Rwanda of Bishop Augustin Misago, who is also accused of involvement in the genocide.

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**Rwanda priest denies massacre**

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A Rwandan Roman Catholic priest, wanted on genocide charges, has been tracked down in Italy where he told an Italian newspaper the accusations were baseless.

The priest, Father Athanase Seromba, is reported to be working in the Italian city of Florence after his church at Nyange in western Rwanda was destroyed in 1994.

[From Our Own Correspondent](#)

He is wanted on suspicion of ordering the destruction of the church and of killing more than two thousand of his parishioners, in one of the most notorious massacres of Tutsis by extremists of the Hutu majority.

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The priest told the Italian newspaper, La Nazione, that the massacre at Nyange took place several days after he had escaped.

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He said he and three other priests had fled to the former Zaire and then to Kenya, before coming to Italy. The human rights organisation, Africa Rights, is due to publish a detailed report on the Nyange massacre later this week, based on testimony from survivors and accomplices.

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**Priests get death sentence for Rwandan genocide**



A court in Rwanda has sentenced two Roman Catholic priests to death for their role in the genocide of 1994, in which up to a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.

It is the first time churchmen have been sentenced to death in Rwanda over the genocide.

The priests were convicted of involvement in two massacres.

In one, they were accused of organising the killing of about 2,000 Tutsis by bulldozing the church in which they were sheltering at Nyange in the western Kibuye region. The bulldozer driver was sentenced to life imprisonment.



Different sections of the Rwandan church have been widely accused of playing an active role in the genocide of 1994 but this is the first time priests have been sentenced to death inside Rwanda.

Pope John Paul II has emphasised that Catholic priests implicated in the killings must be made accountable for their actions.

Rwandan courts have so far convicted about 300 people of genocide-related crimes, but there have yet to be any executions. The European Union recently appealed for all death sentences to be commuted to terms of imprisonment.

More than 120,000 people are still awaiting trial.

The UN is holding separate trials in neighbouring Tanzania and the first verdict is expected later this year.

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Saturday, April 18, 1998 Published at 07:32 GMT 08:32 UK

**World: Africa****Priests get death sentences for Rwandan genocide**

A Rwandan court has sentenced two Roman Catholic priests to death for their involvement in the genocide four years ago.

They are reported to be the first churchmen to be convicted in the genocide trials.

They were charged in connection with the murder of two-thousand Tutsis who were crushed to death when bulldozers destroyed a church at Nyange in which they had taken shelter.

The two priests were also convicted of involvement in a massacre at Nyundo.

Some churchmen are known to have collaborated with Hutu extremists, and the Pope has said they must face the consequences of their actions.

So far Rwanda has convicted more than three-hundred people on genocide charges.

The UN is holding separate trials in neighbouring Tanzania and the first verdict is expected later this year.

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## Rwanda nuns await genocide verdict



The two nuns are accused with helping Hutu soldiers

A Belgian jury has retired to consider its verdict on Thursday in the ground-breaking trial of two Roman Catholic nuns accused of complicity in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

The two women are accused of delivering to their killers thousands of people who had sought refuge in their convent.

The nuns, Sister Maria Kisito Mukabutera and Sister Gertrude Mukangango, and two co-defendants, who face similar charges, have pleaded innocent. If found guilty, they could face life in prison.

The Belgian trial is taking place outside the United Nations Rwanda tribunal process in Arusha, Tanzania.

The Arusha court on Wednesday announced its first not guilty verdict.

It is the first time Belgium has made use of a law passed seven years ago, allowing its courts to hear cases of alleged human rights violations even if they were committed abroad.



It is not known exactly how many people died in the genocide

The prosecution has alleged that the two women enthusiastically embraced genocide when they handed over up to 7,000 Tutsis sheltering in the convent in southern Rwanda.

In the two months that the trial has lasted, the jury has heard evidence from many survivors of the Rwandan genocide, that claimed as many as 800,000 lives.

### Conspiracy allegations

The defendants have maintained their innocence, and their lawyers have argued that they are the victims of a conspiracy.

Human-rights groups hope the trial will set a precedent and make it harder for war criminals to seek sanctuary abroad.

Belgium is the former colonial power in Rwanda, and its willingness to stage this trial may come in part from concerns here that it did not do enough to stop the genocide.

In Arusha, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) acquitted former mayor Ignace Bagilshema of all genocide charges against him.

He was accused of being involved in the murder of 45,000 Tutsis in the region where he was mayor.

The judges said the prosecution had failed to prove its case.

Since starting proceedings in 1994 the ICTR has found eight people of genocide.

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Saturday, 19 May, 2001, 12:04 GMT 13:04 UK

## Rwanda's slow justice



People's memories of Rwanda's horrors run deep

**The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, based in Arusha, Tanzania, was the first court to prosecute a head of government for genocide. It has had its problems in the years since the 1994 bloodbath in Rwanda, and as Andrew Harding reports, it is still hard work.**

I have started scribbling this down in the visitor's gallery of court number three. There is a thick sheet of bullet proof glass in front of me, and beyond it a brightly lit, air conditioned room full of lawyers, judges, and three slightly bored looking defendants.

The defendants were brought in about 20 minutes ago - shuffling past me in handcuffs and smart suits. Two former Rwandan politicians and soldier. One was wearing a bullet-proof vest.

I felt myself flinch when they suddenly walked in. I had never seen a genocide suspect before. They may be innocent until proven guilty, but the stench of their alleged crimes soils the air.

It is an odd feeling sitting in this modern, expensive courtroom in a shabby building, in a remote corner of Tanzania.

On the street outside, safari touts chase German tourists, hoping to tempt them with deals for the nearby Serengeti national park.

Upstairs, there are three courtrooms working at the moment - and 44 defendants, all Rwandan, sitting in a specially built jail on the outskirts of town.

There are ministers in there, newspaper editors, bureaucrats, a doctor - even an Anglican priest.

These are the suspected ringleaders of a killing spree so huge, so fast, and so well organised that almost a million people died in little more than three months.

One of the accused is a woman - a former minister for family and women's affairs. She is accused of genocide and of rape.

After half an hour watching the court proceedings, I found myself stifling a yawn. The wheels of justice here turn very slowly.

The court's official languages are French and English. But most of the witnesses speak Kinyarwanda.

A prosecutor asks a long, complicated question in English, it gets translated into French, then into Kinyarwanda. The confused witness says "what?" - that gets translated back into French, then into English. The question is repeated ... etc.

And that is not the only obstacle. There are lawyers here from all over the world. I met a sharp-suited Canadian sexual harassment lawyer, a London QC with a voice like cut glass, a polite prosecution lawyer from Cameroon who was about to be dismissed for incompetence, and many more.

### Language difficulties

In court, this can lead to something of a culture clash.

I watched a recording of a solemn African lawyer delivering his opening statement, only to find himself interrupted after about 10 seconds by a table thumping American called John Floyd who seemed to object to, well, just about everything. The OJ Simpson trial meets Nuremberg.

Not surprisingly, most trials here drag on for months, if not years.

The Rwandan culture itself complicates matters. The British QC, Diana Ellis told me how hard it was to get a straight answer out of anyone.

"I'm told that Kinyarwanda is an idiomatic language," she said. "Ask someone yes or no, and they'll reply instead with a series of elegant points, slightly related to the matter in hand."

There is also the issue of hearsay. Like much of Africa, Rwanda has a long oral tradition. Stories have always been passed around without being written down.

As a result, it seems, people tend to blur the lines between what they have seen themselves, and what others have told them.

As one weary lawyer put it, you can waste months finding a witness, checking and rechecking his story, and preparing him to give evidence.

Then after a couple of days of cross examination in court, your star witness admits, without seeming to understand how damaging the revelation is, that he did not actually see the event himself. But his wife's aunt did.

Diana Ellis got into trouble with a judge recently for losing patience with a witness during the trial of a genocide suspect - the director of a notorious radio station.

"You're not an idiot," she said to the man. "You told me you've been educated."

The judge intervened, asking her not to use insults.

"But your honour," Ms Ellis replied without missing a beat. "I specifically said he wasn't an idiot."

### Fear goes on

Her witness, like most witnesses here, had his identity hidden for fear of reprisals back in Rwanda. There is a big curtain behind the bullet-proof glass, which seals off the witness box from the visitors' gallery.

The wheels of justice may be slow - but the wheels of

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The exact number killed in the genocide is still unknown

“The Rwandan culture itself complicates matters”



The language used in court is apparently rather idiomatic



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Thursday, 7 June, 2001, 13:55 GMT 14:55 UK

**Rwanda trial opens Belgians' eyes**

The two nuns are accused with helping Hutu soldiers

**By Colette Braeckman**

The Belgian public has been captivated by the trial of four Rwandans - two nuns, a professor and a businessman - who have been found guilty of taking part in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

The eight-week trial has focused on the four individuals, but it has also exposed the genocide itself.

At a deeper level, it has raised questions in Belgium about the former colonial power's responsibility for later atrocities.

An opinion poll published by the daily *Le Soir* shows that almost half of Belgians do not begrudge the trial taking place at the country's expense.

More importantly, the poll shows that more than ever, Belgians support sending out troops to intervene in cases of massive violations of human rights.

Forty-two percent of the respondents criticised Belgium's decision to pull out of Rwanda in the early days of the genocide - a decision that consequently paralysed the UN operation - and 69% think Belgian courts have the right, if not the duty, to prosecute perpetrators of crimes against humanity or genocide.

Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel has been an active supporter of holding the Rwanda trial in Belgium and won the approval of 85% of those questioned.

**Betrayal**

Could this remarkable change in Belgian public opinion be connected to guilt over 80 years of Belgian colonialism ?

It seems more likely that that the highly publicised and much analysed story of Belgium's failure in Rwanda in 1994 has created more guilt than the country's colonial past.

Everybody remembers that the assassination of 10 Belgian UN soldiers, just as the genocide began, triggered the pullout of the entire UN mission.

This is now seen by many Belgians as a betrayal of the Rwandan people.

This sense of guilt has been nurtured by an eight-month commission, during which Belgian parliamentarians examined the country's responsibility and the events before and during the genocide.

Last year, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt went to Kigali himself to deliver a public apology to the Rwandans for having abandoned them.

The parliamentary commission on Rwanda and the trial have exposed the deep connections that were formed after the end of the colonial rule between Rwanda and major power groups in Belgium including the Catholic Church, the Christian Social Democratic party, the army and some intellectuals.

The trial has demonstrated how, and to what great extent, the nuns on trial were protected and supported by these groups.

It was a growing public awareness of the issues that finally led to the trial.

The trial was made possible by a law passed in 1993 and never before implemented.

It allows Belgian courts to try suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity, even if the crimes were committed in other countries.

**Colonial past**

The public has indeed become sensitive to Belgium's failures and responsibility in the Rwandan genocide.

It might now be ready to tackle the older issue of colonisation, as a parliamentary commission is appointed to examine Belgium's role in the 1960 assassination of the former Congolese prime minister, Patrice Lumumba.

Initial inquiry results show that both Belgium's government and its royal palace wanted Lumumba ousted, and even funded opposition forces that were determined to eliminate the elected leader.

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Mr Michel: An active supporter of holding the Rwanda trial in Belgium



It is not known exactly how many people died in the genocide

You are in: [World: Africa](#)[Front Page](#) Monday, 17 April, 2000, 18:37 GMT 19:37 UK[World](#)**Kagame wins a one-horse race**[Africa](#)[Americas](#)[Asia-Pacific](#)[Europe](#)[Middle East](#)[South Asia](#)[From Our Own Correspondent](#)[Letter From](#)[America](#)[UK](#)[UK Politics](#)[Business](#)[Sci/Tech](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Entertainment](#)[Talking Point](#)[In Depth](#)[AudioVideo](#)**By Chris Simpson in Kigali**

At 43, Paul Kagame has finally decided to take on the presidency of Rwanda.

Mr Kagame's selection by Rwanda's parliament and government was a formality once it had become clear that the vice-president and minister of defence was ready to become head of state.

Charles Murigande, the Secretary-General of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) who received five votes against 81 for Mr Kagame, was never in contention.

His appearance on the ballot-sheet appears to have been a tactical ploy by the RPF, which did not want Rwanda's "election" to be seen as a *fait accompli*.

**Military priorities**

The new president has hinted that he will now give up the defence portfolio. But he remains more of a soldier than a politician and security and military issues are likely to figure prominently in the first stages of his presidency.

Mr Kagame has been a firm defender of Rwanda's military engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where thousands of Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) troops have been deployed, both supporting the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) and carrying out hot pursuit operations against Rwandan Interahamwe militia fighters and other groups.

Mr Kagame has strongly backed the Lusaka peace agreement signed in August 1999 and the concept of a United Nations peacekeeping force.

But he has also made clear his contempt for the UN's reaction to the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and will certainly not sanction a Rwandan withdrawal from Congo if Rwanda's security concerns have not been addressed.

Mr Kagame says he has no wish to interfere in Congo's internal politics, stressing repeatedly that "only the Congolese can find solutions to their problems".

**Criticism**

But the RCD is widely viewed as a largely Rwandan creation with no real momentum of its own.

More dangerously, the RPA has been strongly criticised by many Congolese nationals as "an army of occupation", with Rwanda accused of harbouring territorial ambitions - something Mr Kagame has always strongly denied.

Rwanda's actions in Congo have reinforced Mr Kagame's image as a "regional strongman", a label he dislikes but has struggled to get rid of.

Ironically, the war in Congo has virtually destroyed Rwanda's once critical alliance with neighbouring Uganda. For years Kagame was a close associate of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, both in the bush then later as the head of military intelligence.

**Relationship soured**

But that relationship has been soured by serious tactical and personal differences, hitting an all-time low when Ugandan and Rwandan troops clashed in Kisangani in August 1999.

Paul Kagame has always been an easy hate figure for hostile Hutus in exile, accused of imposing a new Tutsi elite on a hostile, disenfranchised majority.

Mr Kagame has spoken out strongly against ethnic divisions, identifying himself as a Rwandan, rather than a Tutsi and criticising outsiders for making too much of the supposed Hutu-Tutsi divide.

But the disappearance from public life of Hutu ex-President Pasteur Bizimungu has brought accusations that power is being increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small, mainly Tutsi RPF clique. Paul Kagame's first challenge as head of state may be to show he is the president of all Rwandans.

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Friday, 24 March, 2000, 15:47 GMT

[World](#)**Blast from Kinshasa greets Kagame**

Government-controlled radio in the Democratic Republic of Congo has used the current political tensions in Kigali to launch a blistering attack on new leader Paul Kagame, long regarded as the real power in Rwanda.

Rwanda and Uganda are the main backers of rebels opposed to the government of Congolese President Laurent Kabila.

RTNC radio said the series of recent resignations by Rwandan Hutu cabinet ministers had exposed "the almost permanent cracks characterising the fragile political-ethnic cohabitation between the majority Hutus and the armed Tutsi minority".

These, and former President Pasteur Bizimungu's decision to resign, were the result of "the monolithic, self-centred, greedy and warlike leadership and diktat of Paul Kagame whose bloodthirsty Nazi and fascist mind is now clearly proved," the radio said.

Mr Bizimungu's resignation was "linked to the aggression against the DR Congo, especially the forced enrolment of Rwandan children and youths aimed at sending them to war against their will," it said.

It branded Kagame "the African Hitler" and an "agent of war".

**Kampala cautious**

The changes evoked a more cautious response from Rwanda's ally Uganda.

Ugandan radio quoted an Ugandan presidential spokesman as saying that his country was willing to grant asylum to Bizimungu should he request it.

The spokesman declined to comment on Bizimungu's resignation directly but "expressed concern over the trend of the events in Rwanda".

Uganda's Minister for Regional Co-operation, Amama Mbabazi, told a Kampala newspaper that he hoped the RPF would "sort out their differences amicably" following the resignation.

"If Uganda is approached we will be ready to help. These are comrades," Mr Mbabazi said.

“  
The monolithic, self-centred, greedy and warlike leadership and diktat of Paul Kagame whose bloodthirsty Nazi and fascist mind is now clearly proved  
”

DR Congo radio

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Kagame served in both Ugandan and Rwandan liberation armies

**By Chris Simpson in Kigali**

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has been a soldier for most of his adult life.

Born in the western Rwanda region of Gitarama in 1957, he left with his family for Uganda four years later amid growing anti-Tutsi violence in his home region.

He joined Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1979, and spent years fighting in the Ugandan bush.

Mr Kagame was made head of NRA military intelligence in 1986 and was always viewed as a close ally of Mr Museveni, both as a guerrilla fighter and in the Ugandan military afterwards.

But Mr Kagame's first allegiance was to Rwanda. Together with Fred Rwigyema, a longstanding friend, Kagame was instrumental in establishing the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), drawing heavily on Rwandan soldiers who had fought alongside him in the NRA.

**Military commander**

When the RPF first invaded Rwanda from Uganda in October 1990, Paul Kagame was in the United States on a military training programme.

After Fred Rwigyema's death on the second day of the war, Mr Kagame became military commander of the RPF.

On taking power in July 1994, Mr Kagame took on the vice-presidency of Rwanda and the defence portfolio, leaving the presidency to Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu who had joined the RPF in Uganda after breaking with the regime of Juvenal Habyarimana.



The RPF overthrew the previous Hutu extremist government

Paul Kagame has long been viewed as the most powerful man in Rwanda.

Although Mr Kagame often mocks his image as a military strongman and powerbroker, little takes place in Rwanda without his knowledge.

**Ascetic**

Colleagues hint at an ascetic temperament, presenting the president as an incorruptible teetotaler and strong disciplinarian.

Mr Kagame eschews any form of flamboyance and is a low-key, dry public speaker. He is married with four children. Leisure pursuits include playing tennis and reading.

Like the RPF as a whole, Mr Kagame downplays any ethnic agenda in Rwanda, presenting himself as a Rwandan and not a Tutsi. He is a frank and forthright critic of the United Nations, believing the UN could have done far more to prevent the genocide of 1994.

Paul Kagame is also a firm advocate of Rwanda's continuing military engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, arguing that vital security issues are at stake and nobody but Rwandans will protect his country's security.

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President Bizimungu: His adviser was gunned down in Kigali

A senior official has been shot dead outside his home in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, in what correspondents say could be a political assassination.

A nightwatchman who witnessed the incident said presidential adviser Assiel Kabera was killed by three men in military uniform who were picked up shortly afterwards by a car.

"The adviser was about to go inside his house when there was the sound of gunfire.

"When the shooting stopped we went to look at the car," he said.

"He had been hit by several shots, one of them went through his head," the nightwatchman said.

Mr Kabera is reported to have told relatives recently that he feared for his life because he thought he was being linked with the former parliamentary speaker, Joseph Sebarenzi, who fled the country recently after being accused of treason.

Mr Kabera and Mr Sebarenzi came from same town, Kibuye, and were Tutsi survivors of the 1994 genocide.

Mr Kabera was also a prominent member of the influential local and national genocide survivors associations, which have been forthright critics of the government.

#### WFP death

A Liberian national working for the UN food agency has also been killed by unknown attackers in Kigali, the World Food Programme announced on Monday.

WFP said Samuel Sargbah, 40, was shot dead in his car late on Saturday night in the Remera neighborhood in Kigali.

WFP Director Catherine Bertini called for a speedy investigation in his murder.

Mr Sargbah is the third WFP worker to be killed in Rwanda in the past three years.

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### Rwanda president heads for Vatican



The Rwandan president, Paul Kagame, has left for Italy and a visit to the Vatican.

The meeting with Pope John Paul will be the first between a Rwandan leader and the pontiff since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

The country is predominantly Roman Catholic and the church has been accused of not doing enough to prevent the slaughter. Rwandan officials say President Kagame -- who sees the Pope on Monday -- will also attend a world summit of statesmen and parliamentarians at the Vatican tomorrow.

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**Rwanda accuses Italy over orphans**



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Many Rwandans felt betrayed and abandoned by the West

Rwandan President Paul Kagame has accused Italian officials of showing contempt after refusing to hand back nearly 50 children of the 1994 genocide.

Mr Kagame's says the Rwandan children have been adopted in Italy against the wishes of their surviving relatives and he went to Italy last week in an unsuccessful attempt to get the children returned.

Forty-one of the children were traced by their Rwandan relatives to the town of Castenedolo near Milan.

But an Italian court ruled that they could not be returned to Rwanda.

During the genocide many children were rescued by aid workers and taken to Europe, and in the past four years, dozens of Rwandan children have been returned home.

Italian officials said the children were legally adopted only after searches for parents or blood relatives proved fruitless.

The mayor of the town says that the children, now aged between six and 10, are now happily settled and a move would be disruptive and unhelpful.

"You can't transfer children who have become accustomed to life in a western country to a country that has nothing," the mayor was quoted as saying.

**Family rights**

Mr Kagame though is threatening legal action to bring their children home.

He told journalists that Rwanda could hardly go to war with Italy but said he could not understand the attitude of Italian officials.

"I don't see how somebody can be denied rights to have back his or her child.

"I don't see under what law or international law. I don't know why they put adoption before the rights of a family to have back their child."

“ Rwanda could hardly go to war with Italy ”  
President Kagame



Rwanda has had to cope with many orphans

**'Contempt' for Africa**

The children have become something of a cause célèbre, and their fate is becoming a top priority for the Rwandan Government - which has long been critical of what it sees as the patronising and often unhelpful attitudes of Western governments towards Rwanda.

Mr Kagame suggested the "stay in Italy" camp based its position more on a snobbish contempt for African poverty than a real concern for the children's welfare.

He said that if the whole issue boiled down to Italy being an easier, more prosperous place to live than Rwanda, all Rwandans should go there.

"Nobody needs to tell us how poor we are," he said, but added that Rwanda was proud of how successfully it had coped since the genocide and had provided homes across the country for orphans.

President Kagame's Tutsi-led rebels came to power after Hutu extremists carried out a three month genocidal campaign that led to the deaths of 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

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