DIALOGUE

THE PROLONGED GENOCIDE

Peace in the Great Lakes Region:
"An Analysis"

Special Edition 211

DIALOGUE

is a magazine of information and reflection.
It is published every three months.
DIALOGUE addresses social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and other issues, with a particular focus on Rwanda.
The magazine DIALOGUE promotes scientific validity and integrity, freedom of expression, and the responsible treatment of information in accordance with applicable laws.

DIALOGUE – B.P. 4857 KIGALI
Tel : 0785269755 / 0788300223
Website: www.dialogue.org.rw
Email : info.dialogueasbl@gmail.com

The content of the articles reflects only the views of their authors..

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Prof. Isaïe NZEYIMANA
Hon. Antoine MUGESERA
Mr. Alfred KABAGAMBA
Mr. Freddy MUTANGUHA

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS FOR THIS EDITION

Hon. Dr. Jean Damascène BIZIMANA
Dr. Aloys TEGERA
Hon. Antoine MUGESERA
Me. Innocent NTEZIRYAYO

PUBLISHER
Dialogue ASBL
P.O. Box 4857, Kigali
Tel: +250 785 269 755 / +250 788 300 223

Printed by IMPRIMU Ltd
E-mail: imprimu@gmail.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

* **In Memoriam: Professor Paul Rutayisire 9**
  Hon. Dr. Jean Damascène Bizimana

* **The Long Genocide: Colonial Racialism, Militia Politics, and the Enduring Targeting of Tutsis in Eastern DRC 17**
  Me Innocent Nteziryayo

* **Who could stop the genocide of Rwandophone Tutsi in the Democratic Republic of Congo? 58**
  Hon. Antoine Mugesera

* **The Cross Border Genocidal Ideology: Case of The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) 104**
  Dr Aloys Tegera

* **Filip Reyntjens, a "researcher-actor" in the Great Lakes Region: what scientific expertise? 116**
  Hon. Dr. Jean Damascène Bizimana

* **Conclusion 163**

* **Through Books and Journals 164**

* **Some recommended books published on the genocide of the Tutsi between 2024 and 2025 ..... 167**

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM / ABBREVIATION	MEANING
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
UN	United Nations
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
FAR	Rwandan Armed Forces
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAZ	Zairian Armed Forces
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
APR	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RDF	Rwanda Defence Force
PALIR	Armed People for the Liberation of Rwanda
ALIR	Army for the Liberation of Rwanda
AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo
RCD	Congolese Rally for Democracy
MLC	Movement for the Liberation of Congo
M23	March 23 Movement
AFC/M23	Alliance Fleuve Congo / March 23 Movement

ASBL	Non-Profit Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
GTZ	GTZ (German Development Cooperation)
Dr	Doctor
Mgr	Monsignor
Sr / Sister	Sister (religious)
Vol.	Volume
No.	Number

FOREWORD

Founded in March 1967 by the Belgian priest Jean Massion, DIALOGUE is one of the oldest and most influential independent periodicals in Rwanda. Since 1982, it has been published by Dialogue ASBL, a Rwandan non-profit organization. From its inception, the magazine has sought to serve as a free platform where Rwandan intellectuals, together with friends of Rwanda from abroad, can express their views, exchange ideas, and foster thoughtful debate on issues affecting society. Over the years, DIALOGUE has become an important channel of communication for intellectuals, particularly students from universities and higher institutes, professionals from both the public and private sectors, members of religious communities, and other contributors committed to reflection and informed discussion.

The magazine DIALOGUE devotes a significant part of its publications to documenting relevant facts to promote objective information and combat misinformation, with the aim of preserving the national unity that was shattered by the genocide. It also contributes to safeguarding memory and strengthening national cohesion. Several international research centers and academic institutions regularly draw on the publications of DIALOGUE. Over the years, the magazine has produced special issues on a range of important topics, including land issues in Rwanda, energy, water, information and communication technologies, democracy and development, human rights and the rule of law, the FDLR, the role of women in democracy, the environment, youth and development, justice and memory, and the fight against genocide denial, among others. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of some of its key members, including Professors Paul Rutayisire and Laurent Nkusi, DIALOGUE was unable to maintain the regular publication of its issues.

The magazine is now resuming its activities and will henceforth be published every quarter, each edition featuring a special thematic dossier.

Today, the DIALOGUE Association has adapted to the new law governing non-governmental organizations (Law No. 058/2024 of 20/06/2024) and is expanding its scope of activities in light of Rwanda's internal context, the Great Lakes sub-region, and the dynamics of globalization, in order to respond to major concerns and challenges. Under its new orientations, Dialogue ASBL, while continuing to publish the DIALOGUE magazine, will focus on promoting intergenerational dialogue and strengthening peacebuilding, social integration, resilience, and unity within communities. The association will continue to conduct research and publish objective analyses on various issues, including peace, national unity, social integration, and resilience. It will also particularly encourage young people to develop a culture of reading, writing, and debate by facilitating their access to reliable and objective information, to counter misinformation and the risks of indoctrination and disorientation that are increasingly spread through social media.

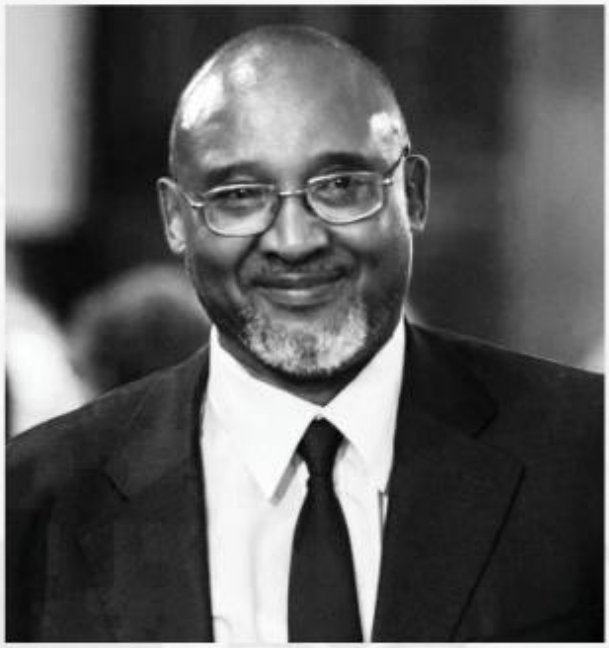
For all these reasons, we have chosen to dedicate this edition of DIALOGUE to an analysis of the current crisis in the Great Lakes Region. A deeper study, analysis, and understanding of this crisis are necessary to move beyond the overly simplistic interpretations often presented by certain media outlets, NGOs, or so-called "experts," who frequently fail to address the root causes of the problem and to propose lasting solutions. One of the fundamental issues rarely examined in depth by many international actors is the problem of genocidal ideology that has taken root in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This ideology was initially carried by the former Rwandan Armed Forces and Hutu militias involved in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Yet it remains a central factor at the heart of the current crisis. The persistence and dissemination of this ideology by certain political, religious, civil, media, and governmental actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and

Burundi also constitute a factor aggravating the crisis, one that is still insufficiently studied and presented in its proper context. These are some of the issues that this edition seeks to address, modestly yet sincerely, in the hope of contributing to the peace so greatly desired in the region.

We wish you an insightful reading.

IN MEMORIAM: Prof. Paul Rutayisire

Author: Dr Jean Damascène BIZIMANA,
Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement, Researcher



Two years ago, on 10 December 2023, Professor Paul Rutayisire, a renowned historian who served for many years as editor of Dialogue magazine alongside the Honorable Antoine Mugesera and Jean Damascène Bizimana, among others, passed away in Brussels. Revue Dialogue asked Dr Jean Damascène Bizimana, who knew this great man, to share his memories with us as a tribute. The recollections he shared with us are moving, accurate, profound, powerful and enlightening. Read on!

Paul Rutayisire, a man above the norm

Asking me to describe in words who Professor Paul Rutayisire was is like asking me to climb a mountain that is difficult to reach. Words are completely inadequate, limited and insufficient to describe in their entirety the nature of his character and the quality of his work. I suggest that the Dialogue Review, to which he devoted much of his talent, dedicate a special issue to his memory

in its next publications. Such an initiative will allow several other acquaintances of the late Professor Paul Rutayisire to complement my account.

1. Paul Rutayisire, a meticulous human being and analyst

Professor Paul Rutayisire was a friend and colleague whose passing has affected me deeply. His memory will remain forever engraved in my heart. One of the qualities I remember most about him is his respect for all human beings, young and old, poor and rich. Paul Rutayisire was blessed with outstanding intelligence, but he would not brag about it. Far from it. He shone with unparalleled simplicity. Humility and wisdom were the pillars that characterized his being.

Although seemingly taciturn, Paul Rutayisire had a welcoming and listening manner that created a closeness with everyone. No one was afraid to approach him, and he knew how to adapt to people of all ages and temperaments, even the most volatile. His lucidity allowed him to avoid conflict with anyone. He knew how to get out of trouble without hurting anyone. He was equally cautious and meticulous in his work and decision-making.

I remember in 2011, when I was part of a national team evaluating the Gacaca trials under his leadership, I noticed specific cases of corruption in Cyangugu and Gikongoro, with credible information relating to them. I included them without hesitation in my report to the relevant government officials. Paul Rutayisire convinced me not to rely immediately on the evidence at hand, even though it seemed obvious to me. He convinced me to take my time gathering further information and to analyze it carefully because, he told me, we would not be excused for the slightest mistake. I resisted his caution for a long time, but in the face of his insistence, I finally conceded and agreed. So, I set about meticulously re-examining my investigation and came up with irrefutable evidence. When I presented it to Paul Rutayisire, he burst out laughing and said, "Don't you see, dear Damascène, that

I was right?" "Of course," I replied, offering him a glass of gratitude at Chez Lando. In the end, these cases of corruption, backed up by tangible evidence, were upheld and punished as they should have been by the National Gacaca Court Service. All thanks to Paul Rutayisire's meticulous caution.

2. A remarkable researcher

Paul Rutayisire loved his work as a researcher and teacher. He loved and knew how to delve into archives, read them diligently, analyse them and produce articles of unrivalled originality. That is why not even one of his writings has ever been contested or questioned. All his writings are of renowned scientific authority. To this his love and commitment must be added to his profession. Indeed, Paul Rutayisire taught hundreds of thousands of students, particularly in Burundi and Rwanda. He guided several other foreign researchers who were interested in Rwanda. In this way, he contributed to the transmission of knowledge for decades. His legacy will live on long after his death, if not forever. Rwanda and humanity as a whole will always benefit from the immense historical writings that Professor Paul Rutayisire has left for present and future generations.

Two French researchers, Dr Rémi Korman and Dr Florent Piton, who benefited from Professor Paul Rutayisire's scientific support, testify as follows: "Specialist researchers have lost a learned colleague who was also a mentor and guide for younger generations of researchers. « (See Rémi Korman and Florent Piton, « Paul Rutayisire, des lumières de l'histoire à la refondation de la société rwandaise » in Revue Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps 2024/1-2, N° 151-152 : Rwanda 1994. Archives, Mémoires, Héritages)

The intellectual qualities that made Paul Rutayisire famous began with his brilliant thesis, which he defended in 1984 at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland): « La Christianisation du Rwanda (1900-1945). Méthode missionnaire et politique selon

Mgr Classe. » (In English «The Christianisation of Rwanda (1900-1945). Missionary and political methods according to Mgr. Classe). Some, including ideologues who supported the extremist Hutu thesis, such as Father Guy Theunis, recognized in their writings the unique quality of Paul Rutayisire's thesis, which made him the foremost Rwandan expert on the history of the Church in Rwanda. The quality of his thesis was honored by the University of Fribourg in 1987 with its publication in its entirety by Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, thus offering the public an unparalleled work on the history of evangelization in Rwanda, which anyone can order in bookshops, including online. Don't miss it on Amazon.fr.

3. An immeasurable number of publications.

Professor Paul Rutayisire leaves behind a wealth of publications, both personal and collective. Paul Rutayisire spent a good part of his intellectual life reading and writing. More than a hundred articles, lectures, written and unpublished works are the product of his talents. There could be no conference in Rwanda or abroad on political, social, historical, memorial and other topics without the active and participatory presence of Professor Paul Rutayisire, both in the preparations, during the proceedings and in the subsequent drafting of the proceedings of the symposia to make them available to the public.

In Burundi, Professor Paul Rutayisire was for many years a member of the editorial board of the journal AU CŒUR DE L'AFRIQUE, which produced numerous-quality publications in various fields relating to the Great Lakes region. In 1995, the journal AU CŒUR DE L'AFRIQUE, September 1995, vol. 2/3, n°61, conducted an in-depth analysis of the crisis in the Great Lakes region, focusing on the causes of the genocide committed against the Tutsi in Rwanda, its immediate and long-term consequences, and possible solutions and lessons to be learned. The proposals that emerged from these reflections subsequently proved relevant to the reconstruction of Rwanda, justice, memory and reconciliation.

To cite just one example, his article « Rwanda: débats en cours après le génocide et les massacres », publié dans Au cœur de l'Afrique, p. 231 281 (in English "Rwanda: ongoing debates after the genocide and massacres", published in Au cœur de l'Afrique, pp. 231-281, will forever remain one of the first clear analyses published by a scientific journal explaining the causes and repercussions of the last genocide of the 20th century, that of the Tutsis in Rwanda. Paul Rutayisire clarified the evidence of this genocide at a time when denialists, particularly missionaries, were working in Europe to deny the reality of the facts and falsify responsibilities to dilute the gravity of the genocide committed against the Tutsi and distort its uniqueness.

Among the publications that can be cited as examples are:

- Paul Rutayisire, Faustin Rutembesa and Jean-Pierre Karegeye, Rwanda: l'Église catholique à l'épreuve du génocide (Rwanda: The Catholic Church put to the test by genocide), Africana Publishing, Canada, 2000
- Paul Rutayisire, Jean Philippe Schreiber and Déo Byanafashe, Les religions au Rwanda : défis, convergences et compétitions (Religions in Rwanda : challenges, convergences and competitions), Editions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda, 2009
- Paul Rutayisire, Laurent Nkusi, Faustin Rutembesa, Evariste Ntakirutimana, Rwanda 18 years after the genocide perpetrated against Tutsi (1994-2012): Testimonies and Reflections, National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG), 2014
- Roland Junod and Paul Rutayisire, Citoyenneté et réconciliation au Rwanda, Collection du Centre de Recherche Sociale, Haute Ecole Spécialisée de Suisse, 2015 (in English Citizenship and Reconciliation in Rwanda, Collection of the Centre for Social Research, Swiss University of Applied Sciences, 2015
- Etc.

Shortly before he left us, Paul Rutayisire left me an important work that he wanted to publish, demonstrating the role of the Rwandan interim government of Théodore Sindikubwabo and

Jean Kambanda in the perpetration of the Genocide against the Tutsi. Its posthumous publication is worthwhile.

4. Unanimous recognition

Paul Rutayisire enjoyed the trust of everyone, of the whole of Rwandan society, including in circles that are not usually very open to outsiders. He was one of the few Rwandan intellectuals to have taught church history at the Nyakibanda Major Seminary without interruption from the end of the genocide until his death. This continued trust on the part of the Rwandan bishops did not come out of nowhere. It was the result of the well-known recognition of the human and intellectual qualities that Paul Rutayisire embodied. It is this unanimous recognition of the uniqueness of his talents and wisdom that explains the tireless conviction of the Rwandan prelates to entrust him with the authority of history courses for future priests of the indigenous clergy and religious trained at the Grand Seminary of Nyakibanda. It is customary in ecclesiastical circles for the selection of seminary professors, both priests and lay people, to be subject to rigorous consultation approved by the Episcopal Conference. Paul Rutayisire enjoyed this status without hindrance.

5. A builder of Rwanda after the genocide

Since the end of the Genocide against the tutsi in July 1994, Professor Paul Rutayisire has been a tireless builder of unity among Rwandans. Returning to Rwanda from Burundi, his country of exile, earlier than many other former Rwandan refugees, he was one of the first professors to open the National University of Rwanda. In doing so, he enabled young Rwandans to resume their academic education, preventing them from sinking into the despair created by this crime of crimes. He combined his profession with many other tasks to preserve memory by organizing national and international conferences to explain the horror of the genocide

to the world. At the same time, he organized young students to introduce them to research, publication and participation in important symposiums held around the world.

Paul Rutayisire was one of the driving forces behind the revival of Rwanda's socio-political life. For example, he played a key role as a historian in the Urugwiro meetings in 1998-1999, which reflected on ways and means of rebuilding Rwanda on a sound footing after the genocide. It was during these Urugwiro discussions that innovative ideas were put forward that enabled Rwanda to recover on the basis of our culture, such as the use of Gacaca to resolve the heavy legacy of the genocide and the establishment of public institutions, based on popular consultations, with a view to building the country on new, solid and sustainable foundations.

Paul Rutayisire worked diligently with other intellectuals to develop ideas and publications with a view to proposing a scientific understanding based on historical facts and evidence of the tragedy of the genocide committed against the Tutsi. This led to the creation, in partnership with the late Dominican priest Bernardin Muzungu, of the Revue Cahiers Saint Dominique, which later became Cahiers Lumière et Société to avoid confusion with the Dominican congregation. Before the return of the Revue Dialogue to Rwanda, these Cahiers were the only scientific publications in Rwanda for several years. The quality and relevance of the contributions published in these Cahiers, as in Dialogue, are an indelible mark on the history of our country. The greatest advantage of Cahiers Lumière et Société, edited by Father Muzungu, as its name suggests, is that it addressed a specific theme from different angles with several authors. This was and still is its unrivalled strength.

6. A tireless promoter of the DIALOGUE magazine

Personally, I am deeply grateful to Professor Paul Rutayisire and Antoine Mugesera who, in 2005, when I returned to Rwanda after completing my university studies in France, approached

me to ask for my collaboration in relaunching the Dialogue magazine in Rwanda. I will never regret this encounter and the future collaboration that followed. We succeeded in repatriating the Dialogue magazine, which had been stolen by deniers who published it in Brussels, claiming that it was only temporary, but refusing to return it to Rwanda. Their defeat required legal action in Belgium, which dismissed their case. It was the joint tenacity of Paul Rutayisire and Antoine Mugesera that won the case, allowing Dialogue magazine to be published in Rwanda as the mouthpiece of a Rwandan association, ASBL DIALOGUE. This is only right and proper.

I want to say this loud and clear because I know it was not an easy undertaking, but it was successful. Since its return to Rwanda, Dialogue magazine has benefited from contributions of immense quality from Professor Paul Rutayisire. The dozens of articles published in Dialogue magazine in Rwanda since its repatriation to Belgium in 2005 are my most eloquent witnesses. They clearly prove my point. Most of the contributions to Dialogue magazine from 2005 to the present day have come from Paul Rutayisire and Antoine Mugesera. Well done to them!

It is time to conclude. I would like to end by quoting the Rwandan saying "Ararekwa ntashira" (words are spared, they never run out) to say thank you once again to our much-missed brother and unforgettable friend Paul Rutayisire. I wish you, dear Paul, eternal rest, now and forever. I would also like to express my deepest sympathy to your dear wife Martine and your children. Farewell, Paul. Requiescat in Pace.

The Long Genocide: Colonial Racialism, Militia Politics, and the Enduring Targeting of Tutsis in Eastern DRC

Author: Me Innocent Nteziryayo, Lawyer, London, U.K.

ABSTRACT



This article examines the persistence of violence targeting Tutsi communities in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in light of the legacy of colonial racism and regional political dynamics. It analyzes the role of armed militias and hate speech in the continued targeting of these populations. The author shows how these factors contribute to a prolonged cycle of persecution and insecurity. The article calls for greater awareness and concrete actions to end these violences and prevent new crimes.

Biography: Me Innocent Nteziryayo is a Rwandan legal practitioner specializing in issues of justice, human rights, and governance. He has extensive experience in legal and institutional matters, having worked with various public institutions and organizations dedicated to promoting the rule of law.

Throughout his career, he has contributed to several initiatives related to justice, research, and capacity building in the legal field. His main areas of interest include transitional justice, conflict prevention, and the promotion of peace.

Introduction

The persecution of Tutsi populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) constitutes one of the most enduring and under-theorised political violences in the post–Cold War Great Lakes Region[1]. While scholarship on the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda is extensive, the regional reverberations of anti-tutsi ideology—its migration, mutation, and institutionalisation in the DRC—have received insufficient analytical attention[2]. This paper argues that the systematic targeting of Congolese Tutsis—Banyamulenge, Banyarwanda, and other Tutsi-identifying communities[3]—meets the definitional contours of genocidal violence, as articulated in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,[4] not only through recurrent acts of killing but through the production of an ideological field that normalises exterminatory violence[5].

---

[1]Rukumbuzi Delphin Ntanyoma and Helen Hintjens, 'Expressive violence and the slow genocide of the Banyamulenge of South Kivu' (2022) 22(3) *Ethnicities (SAGE)* 3-4.

[2]Lars-Christopher Huening, 'Making use of the past: the Rwandophone question and the "Balkanisation of the Congo"' (2013) 40(135) *Review of African Political Economy* 13, 15 and 18.

[3]Ntanyoma and Hintjens (n 1) 6.

[4]See Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (adopted 9 December 1948, entered into force 12 January 1951) 78 UNTS 277, art 2, where genocide is defined as:

"...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

a. *Killing members of the group;*
b. *Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
c. *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
d. *Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
e. *Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."*

[5]Court A, 'The Banyamulenge of South Kivu: The "nationality question"' (2013) 72(3) *African Studies* 416, 424-426.

"Genocide," in legal and scholarly discourse, extends beyond mass killing to include acts committed with intent to destroy a group as such[6]. In the Congolese context, this intent manifests through the persistent framing of Tutsis as foreigners, invaders, or "Rwandan proxies"—a discursive architecture that legitimises their exclusion, displacement, and physical elimination[7]. This paper therefore examines not merely acts of violence but the ideological infrastructures that enable and sustain them. Methodologically, the paper adopts a historical-sociological approach, drawing from archival materials, secondary literature, UN reports (including the 2010 Mapping Report),[8] and contemporary human rights documentation. It integrates political anthropology, genocide studies, and regional security analysis to trace the longue durée of anti-tutsi ideology from colonial racial epistemologies to contemporary armed mobilisation. The aim is twofold: (1) to map the genealogy of anti-tutsi ideology as a transnational and adaptive discourse; and (2) to situate contemporary violence within a coherent analytical framework that demonstrates continuity in intent, actors, and political utility.

[6]See *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (adopted 17 July 1998, entered into force 1 July 2002) 2187 UNTS 90, art 6; Kai Ambos, 'What does "intent to destroy" in genocide mean?' (2009) 91(876) *International Review of the Red Cross* 833, 835.

[7]Huening (n 2) 15.

[8]*Report of the Mapping Exercise – Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003* (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, August 2010) < https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/ohchr/2010/en/92089 > accessed 18 November 2025.

2. Historical Background

2.1. Pre-1994 Presence of Tutsi Communities in Eastern Congo

The presence of Tutsi communities in the territory now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo predates both colonialism and the contemporary borders that divide the Great Lakes[9]. Groups such as the Banyamulenge settled the South Kivu highlands between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, establishing pastoralist societies with deep territorial and cultural attachments[10]. These settlements were not anomalous movements but part of long-standing transboundary mobility patterns in the region, in which communities routinely crossed the fluid precolonial frontiers between present-day Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo[11]. In North Kivu, Tutsi and Hutu Banyarwanda communities similarly integrated into local economies and chieftaincies, often under recognised customary authorities[12]. Despite this historical presence, postcolonial political actors have persistently framed these communities as foreigners, a narrative rooted not in demographic evidence but in later political manipulation. By the late twentieth century, the idea that Tutsis were "newcomers" had become a central myth used to legitimise their exclusion.

[9]G Mathys,'Questioning territories and identities in the pre-colonial (nineteenth-century) Lake Kivu region' (2021) 91(3) *Africa* 493–515.

[10]S L Rukundwa, 'The Banyamulenge of the Democratic Republic of the Congo: a cultural community in the making' (2004) 60(1-2) *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 369.

[11]ibid, 372-375.

[12]K Vlassenroot, 'Citizenship, identity formation & conflict in South Kivu: the case of the Banyamulenge' (2002) 29(93-94) *Review of African Political Economy* 499.

2.2. Colonial Racial Hierarchies and the Invention of Tutsi Otherness

Belgiancolonialadministrationplayedadecisiveroleincodifying ethnic distinctions and creating the ideological foundation upon which modern anti-tutsi politics would later rest[13]. Drawing from the Hamitic hypothesis—a racial theory that wrongly classified Tutsis as Caucasoid migrants from the Horn of Africa[14]—Belgian authorities institutionalised rigid categories of race and ethnicity through identity cards, schooling, and church networks[15]. Under colonial indirect rule, Tutsis were often privileged in local administration, not because of indigenous hierarchies but because colonial ideology constructed them as "superior pastoralists" with supposed natural leadership qualities[16]. This artificial elevation hardened social boundaries and engendered resentment. More importantly, colonial discourse embedded the notion of Tutsi "foreignness" deep into administrative and ecclesiastical structures[17].

Although post-colonial governments formally abandoned racial taxonomies, their ideological residue persisted, enabling political elites to mobilise the claim that Tutsis were outsiders with divided loyalties,[18] thereby justifying exclusionary policies and violence.

---

[13]ibid.

[14]Anita Salbitani, *The Democratic Republic of Congo: The Shift from Colonialism to Post-Colonialism through the Lens of Non-State Actors* (LUISS University, BA Thesis, 2024/25) https://tesi.luiss.it/42786/1/652212_SALBITANI_ANITA.pdf accessed 20 November 2025.

[15]Petra Vervust, *'The Relative Importance of Ethnicity. Class and Race in Colonial Rwanda. The Cases of Prison Policies, Corvées, Taxation, Census and Identity Booklets'* (2012) 42(4) *Journal of Belgian History* 74, 92-93.

[16]ibid, 83-86.

[17]Arthur Blouin & Sharun W Mukand, 'Erasing Ethnicity? Propaganda, Nation Building and Identity in Rwanda' (2019) *Working Paper* (University of Warwick Economics Department) 43 and 45.

[18]Delphin Rukumbuzi Ntanyoma, 'Under the Shadow of Violence: Are the Banyamulenge Experiencing a Slow Genocide?' (2025) *The International Journal*

2.3. Nationality Politics, Mobutu, and Anti-tutsi Mobilisation

The late Mobutu era transformed these colonial residues into explicit political tools. Citizenship legislation became a weapon for determining who belonged to the Congolese polity[19]. The 1972 citizenship decree temporarily recognised Banyarwanda populations as Congolese, but the reversal in 1981 stripped them of legal protection and entrenched suspicion toward Kinyarwanda-speaking communities[20]. Political elites—particularly in the Kivus—exploited anxieties over land scarcity, electoral competition, and the erosion of customary authority to depict Tutsis as demographic invaders[21]. By the early 1990s, discriminatory practices had become normalised: Tutsi families were removed from voting registers, derided in political rhetoric, and increasingly targeted in local disputes[22]. This context meant that, even before the arrival of Rwandan genocidaires in 1994, the discursive infrastructure necessary for systematic anti-tutsi mobilisation was firmly in place.

of Human Rights 1, 17.

[19]Mamdani M, 'Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism' (2001) 43(4) *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 651, 658.

[20]*Democratic Republic of Congo, Loi n° 1981/002 du 29 juin 1981 sur la nationalité zaïroise*, 29 June 1981, < https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/1981/fr/14569 > accessed 19 November 2025.

[21]Minority Rights Group, 'Banyarwanda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo' < https://minorityrights.org/communities/banyarwanda/ > accessed 19 November 2025.

[22]ibid.

3. The 1994 Genocide and Its Regional Impact

3.1. Regional Reverberations of the Rwandan Genocide

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda reshaped the entire Great Lakes region, not only by causing mass death but by displacing the ideological, military, and organisational infrastructures of genocide into neighbouring states[23]. As the RPF ended the massacres, more than one million refugees—among them tens of thousands of ex-FAR soldiers and Interahamwe militia members—fled into Eastern Congo[24]. These individuals did not arrive as disorganised civilians; they transported weapons, command structures, and propaganda networks across the border[25]. The migration of these actors constituted a transnational extension of genocidal intent, whereby Congo became both sanctuary and operational base for forces dedicated to the extermination of Tutsis.

3.2. Militarisation of Refugee Camps and Reconstitution of Genocidal Forces

The refugee camps established around Goma, Bukavu, and Uvira quickly evolved into militarised enclaves dominated by former génocidaires[26]. Humanitarian agencies lacked the capacity or mandate to demilitarise the camps, enabling militia leaders to

[23]M. J. Toole et al, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis: what happened in Goma, Zaire, in July, 1994?' (1995) 346 *The Lancet* 876-878.

[24]Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, 'Back Against the Wall: The Return of the Génocidaire Threat' in *Why Comrades Go to War: Liberation Politics and the Outbreak of Africa's Deadliest Conflict* (Oxford University Press 2016, online edn [18] May 2017) 305, 331.

25Human Rights Watch, *The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo* (July 2002) < https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/drc/Congo0602-03.htm#P284_29771 > accessed 19 November 2025.

[26] Bradley, Miriam, 'Genocide in Rwanda and Its Aftermath, 1994–1996', *The Politics and Everyday Practice of International Humanitarianism* (Oxford, 2023; online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 July 2023) 73-90.

control food distribution, rearm with diverted aid, and continue disseminating anti-tutsi propaganda[27]. These camps effectively reproduced the political geography of pre-1994 Rwanda, allowing militias to reorganise, recruit, and maintain ideological discipline[28]. The hate narratives deployed during the genocide were not only sustained but adapted to a new context, in which Congolese Tutsi communities were redefined as internal enemies[29]. This period marked the shift of anti-tutsi ideology from a national to a regional phenomenon, embedded within the social and political fabric of Eastern Congo.

3.3. Emergence of the FDLR and Institutional Continuity of Genocide Ideology

The formation of the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in the late 1990s gave institutional coherence to the genocidal agenda[30]. The FDLR positioned itself as the political and military successor to the extremist Hutu Power movement[31]. Its public communiqués and internal documents consistently framed both Rwandan and Congolese Tutsis as existential threats that had to be neutralised[32]. Unlike other armed groups that emerged from

[27]ibid.

[28]ibid.

[29]Marc Le Pape and Jean-Hervé Bradol, 'The "Disappeared" of Congo-Zaïre, 1996-1997: The Question of the Massacres of Rwandan Hutu Refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo' (Médecins Sans Frontières, 30 March 2021) < https://msf-crash.org/en/blog/disappeared-congo-zaire-1996-1997-question-massacres-rwandan-hutu-refugees-democratic-republic#:~:text=That%20statement%20was%20confirmed%20by%20multiple%20sources:,witness%20accounts%20(from%20clergy%20members%2C%20in%20particular > accessed 20 November 2025.

[30]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 'Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) Narrative' (May 2015)<https://www.start.umd.edu/baad/narratives/democratic-front-liberation-rwanda-fdlr.html > accessed 20 November 2025.

[31]ibid.

[32]Wolfgang Kresse, 'A Brief History of the 1993-2003 Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo' (SAS Research Note No 56, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, May 2019) < https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/195917/SAS-Research-Note-56.pdf > accessed 19 November 2025.

local grievances, the FDLR possessed a transnational ideological project directly rooted in the genocidal doctrine of 1994[33]. Through alliances with Congolese political actors and integration into local militias, the FDLR helped normalise anti-tutsi ideology across the Kivus,[34] making exterminationist discourse a pervasive element of regional political culture.

3.4. Regionalisation and Normalisation of Exterminationist Narratives

By the early 2000s, anti-tutsi ideology had become a regionalised framework for interpreting political crises[35]. Congolese elites used it to mobilise supporters, delegitimise opponents, justify territorial claims, and explain state failures[36]. Armed groups adopted it to rationalise attacks, extortion, and forced displacement[37].

Communities absorbed it as a lens through which to interpret insecurity and scarcity[38]. The result was a durable ideological environment in which Tutsis were constructed as perpetual outsiders, invaders, and legitimate targets for violence[39].

---

[33]Rakiya Omaar, *The Leadership of Rwandan Armed Groups Abroad with a Focus on the FDLR and RUD/Urunana* (Report commissioned by the Rwanda Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission December 2008) 65–66.

[34]Amnesty International, *Rwanda: Safer to Stay Silent — The Chilling Effect of Rwanda's Laws on 'Genocide Ideology' and 'Sectarianism'* (Index No AFR 47/005/2010, August 2010) < https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/afr470052010en.pdf > accessed 21 November 2025.

[35]K Hoffmann, 'Ethnogovernmentality: The making of ethnic territories and subjects in Eastern DR Congo' (2021) 119 *Geoforum* 1, 13.

[36]S Autesserre, 'Dangerous tales: Dominant narratives on the Congo and their unintended consequences' (2012) 111(443) *African Affairs* 202, 209.

[37]ibid, 206.

[38]Felix Mukwiza Ndahinda, 'Anti-tutsi hate speech refuels conflict in eastern DR Congo' (Clingendael Spectator, 3 February 2022) < https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/anti-tutsi-hate-speech-refuels-conflict-eastern-dr-congo#:~:text=From%201993%2C%20broadcasts%20by%20the,Social%20media%20amplified%20hate%20speech > accessed 20 November 2025.

[39]ibid.

This transformation demonstrates that the genocide's core logic did not remain confined to Rwanda; it metastasised into a broader system of political meaning in Eastern Congo. Since 2022, over 450 villages have been destroyed in the high plateaus of South Kivu, with more than 500,000 cattle looted and sold openly[40]. More than 80% of the Banyamulenge population has been forced into exile, with tens of thousands in refugee camps across neighboring countries and beyond. Those who remain face continued persecution, including arbitrary arrests based on their Tutsi appearance, with over 700 individuals detained without trial in violation of Congolese law[41]. Additionally, hate-motivated violence has escalated, exemplified by the lynching and brutal killings of military personnel like Major Joseph Kaminzobe and Lieutenant Gisore Kabongo. These incidents, along with increasing hate speech targeting Tutsis and other marginalized groups, have led to international sanctions, notably from the European Union against individuals inciting violence. Despite these actions, state inaction and the prevalence of hate speech continue to exacerbate tensions and violence in the region.

The table below highlights instances of hate speech and xenophobia in the DRC, listing various individuals and their inflammatory statements or actions targeting Tutsi and Banyamulenge communities. These include calls for violence, denial of Congolese identity, and incitement of hatred, with some individuals facing sanctions or condemnation. The table documents the ongoing impact of such rhetoric on human rights violations and the persecution of these communities.

[40]Nteziryayo Innocent, 'Persecution Against the Banyamulenge in DRC – The Banyamulenge: A community prey to arrests and violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)' (Genocide Watch, 2 Dec 2024, updated 4 Dec 2024) < https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/violence-against-the-banyamulenge-in-drc > accessed 20 November 2025.

[41]Nteziryayo Innocent, 'Updated Report: Anti-Banyamulenge Attacks, DR Congo' (Genocide Watch, 17 May 2023) < https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/report-on-anti-banyamulenge-attacks-in-dr-congo > accessed 21 November 2025.

Table 1: Few popular Hate Speech and Xenophobia in the DRC

Hate speech and xenophobia in the DRC					
1.	July 19, 2023	Television	–	MP Justin Bitakwira	MP Justin Bitakwira said on television: "A Tutsi is a criminal by birth." The EU sanctioned it in 2022.
2.	October 24, 2022	Canada	–	Martin Fayulu	Martin Fayulu denied the Congolese identity of the Banyamulenge on the basis of language.
3.	Until 2021	–	–	Honoré N'Gbanda	Honoré N'Gbanda, former head of Mobutu's secret service, described the Tutsis as «invaders».
4.	In progress	–	–	Journalist Kwebe Kimpele	Journalist Kwebe Kimpele denies the Congolese nationality of the Tutsis.
5.	November 30, 2019	Baraka (Fizi)	–	MP Omer Bulakali	MP Omer Bulakali called for a mobilization against the Banyamulenge.

6.	Undated	–	–	Member of Parliament Freddy Musambya	MP Freddy Musambya accused the Banyamulenge of aggression and criticized their presence in the army.
7.	January 8, 2023	Luvungi	–	Deputy Claude Misare	MP Claude Misare encouraged civilians to arm themselves with machetes to fight the Banyamulenge.
8.	Undated	–	–	André Mashaka Byadunia	André Mashaka Byadunia has incited protests and land claims against the Banyamulenge.
9.	Undated	Goma	–	General Aba Van Ang	General Aba Van Ang urged the people of Goma to arm themselves against the «Rwandan enemies».
10.	November 24, 2024	Goma	–	Minister of Justice Constant Mutamba	Justice Minister Constant Mutamba called for the execution of «Rwandan Tutsi collaborators».
11.	August 1998	–	–	Vice-President Yerodia Ndombasi	Vice President Yerodia Ndombasi has called the Tutsi «germs to be eradicated,» inciting massacres and cannibalism.

12.	January and July 2023	–	–	Minister Nzangi and MP Bitakwira	Minister Nzangi and MP Bitakwira made xenophobic remarks denying the Congolese identity of the Tutsis.
13.	December 2024	–	–	President Tshisekedi	State of the Nation address: President Tshisekedi has repeated allusions to the «great replacement» theory, fueling hatred.

This table is a creation by the author

4. Evolution of Anti-tutsi Ideology in the DRC

4.1. The Construction of Tutsis as Non-Citizens

After 1994, political discourse in Congo increasingly revolved around the claim that Tutsi-speaking populations were fundamentally alien to the nation[42]. This narrative—rooted in colonial racial theory and sharpened by Mobutu-era nationality politics—became the ideological basis for systematic exclusion[43]. Tutsis were framed as demographic infiltrators, collaborators of Rwanda, and threats to Congolese sovereignty[44]. This framing allowed political elites to convert local grievances over land, resources, and representation into a racialised narrative of national defence. Citizenship was not merely a legal status but a battlefield upon which the legitimacy of Tutsi identity was contested and frequently denied.

4.2. Media, Propaganda, and the Reproduction of Hate

Propaganda became essential to the diffusion of anti-tutsi ideology. Local radio stations, political speeches, urban pamphlets, and, more recently, social media campaigns circulated dehumanising language that depicted Tutsis as vermin, serpents, or agents of foreign domination. These narratives reproduced the rhetorical strategies of the Rwandan genocide, demonstrating clear ideological continuity. In areas of weak state presence, such propaganda served as a form of political socialisation, shaping

[42]GSDRC, 'Tutsi Power in Rwanda and the Citizenship Crisis in Eastern Congo' (May2015)<https://gsdrc.org/document-library/tutsi-power-in-rwanda-and-the-citizenship-crisis-in-eastern-congo/#:~:text=It%20is%20in%20this%20context,conflict%20into%20the%20civil%20sphere > accessed 19 November 2025.

[43]Andrea Purdeková and David Mwambari, 'Post-genocide identity politics and colonial durabilities in Rwanda' (2022) 14(1) Critical African Studies 19, 24.

[44]ibid.

collective perceptions and legitimising violence. During electoral periods or episodes of heightened insecurity, hate speech intensified, functioning as a catalyst for organised attacks.

4.3. Role of Political Elites and Armed Groups in Institutionalising Ideology

Political actors in both national and provincial arenas frequently instrumentalised anti-tutsi sentiment to consolidate their power[45]. By portraying Tutsis as invaders, politicians positioned themselves as defenders of the territorial integrity of the state, gaining support from communities who perceived themselves as threatened[46]. Armed groups operationalised this ideology by targeting Tutsi civilians, confiscating cattle, destroying villages, and enforcing territorial control. Violence was not random; it was structured by an ideological framework that portrayed elimination as necessary for communal survival[47]. The involvement of both state-aligned forces and non-state militias indicates that this ideology transcended organisational boundaries, embedding itself in the broader political economy of conflict.

4.4. Anti-tutsi Ideology as a Long-Term, Structural Project

What differentiates anti-tutsi ideology in Congo from ordinary ethnic hostility is its longevity, adaptability, and structural function[48]. It operates as an instrument of political control, enabling elites to deflect responsibility for governance failures

[45]Human Rights Watch, The Rwandan Genocide: How It Was Prepared (7 April 2006) https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/africa/rwanda0406/4 htm#:~:text=Organizers%20of%20the%20genocide%20used,itself%20would%20not%20have%20sufficed. accessed 19 November 2025.

[46]ibid.

[47]Human Rights Watch (n 25).

[48]Howard Adelman, 'Dark Impulses or Rational Calculation? – Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley: *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder* (Princeton University Press 2006)' (2007) *The Review of Politics* 713-716.

by redirecting public anger toward a manufactured internal enemy[49]. It functions as a technology of violence, defining who can be harmed with impunity. It also constitutes a long-term project of demographic engineering, in which the displacement, marginalisation, or elimination of Tutsi communities is portrayed as essential to national survival[50]. In this sense, the ideology bears all the hallmarks of genocidal thinking: it constructs a target population as a threat to be neutralised, legitimises exceptional violence, and seeks to eliminate the political, cultural, and physical presence of that group.

5. Major Incidents and Patterns of Violence (1996–Present)

5.1. The Congo Wars and the Entrenchment of Targeted Violence

The First and Second Congo Wars (1996–1997; 1998–2003) marked the transition of anti-tutsi ideology from a discourse of exclusion to a systematic program of violence[51]. The initial uprising by Banyamulenge communities in 1996, which triggered the AFDL's march on Kinshasa, intensified existing resentment among political elites who framed Tutsis as agents of Rwandan hegemony[52]. As regional armies intervened, Tutsi civilians were deliberately targeted by local militias, armed youth groups, and

[49]dahinda F & Mugabe A S, 'Streaming Hate: Exploring the Harm of Anti-Banyamulenge and Anti-Tutsi Hate Speech on Congolese Social Media' (2022) *J Genocide Res* 1, 22.

[50]Michael S. Waltman, "The Normalizing of Hate Speech and How Communication Educators Should Respond," Communication Education 67, no. 2 (2018), 259–65.

[51]Filip Reyntjens, 'The Congo Wars' (2020) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.

[52]ECOSOC, Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire, prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Roberto Garretón, in accordance with Commission resolution 1996/77, E/CN.4/1997/6 of 28 January 1997, para. 135.

elements of the collapsing Zairian Armed Forces[53]. The wars produced mass displacement, with thousands of Tutsi families fleeing to Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania. The pattern of violence was not incidental: Tutsi communities were singled out as collaborators, "fifth columnists," or demographic threats[54]. The wars, in effect, normalised anti-tutsi hostility within the broader Congolese political imagination by embedding it within the narrative of resisting foreign aggression[55]. The long-term legacy of these wars was the consolidation of exterminatory discourses that would outlast the major combat operations.

5.2. Recurrent Massacres and Targeted Killings across the Kivus

Following the formal end of the Congo Wars, violence against Tutsi civilians persisted in more localised but equally devastating forms[56]. In North Kivu, massacres in areas such as Masisi, Walikale, and Rutshuru frequently involved the rounding up of Tutsi villagers, the killing of adult men, sexual violence against women, and the destruction of cattle—an economic lifeline for many communities[57]. Reports across the early 2000s document patterns of summary executions, ambushes on civilian convoys, and reprisal killings justified through the narrative that Tutsi were "foreign occupiers"[58].

[53]Docile Television, "12 Millions De Congolais Déjà Tué Par Ruberwa Et Kagame Le Kinois On Dit Trop C'est Trop," 3 January 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_xrNU_3Dkw > Accessed 19 November 2025.

[54]Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Duke University Press 2016) 9.

[55]Thomas Zeitzoff, 'How Social Media Is Changing Conflict' (2017) 61(9) *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 1970-1991.

[56]Christopher P. Davey, 'Investigating Multidirectional Violence in Eastern Congo: Owning "Genocide" and Pre-judicial Atrocity' (2024) 6(2) *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 69-104.

[57]ibid.

[58]Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'UN Report Exposes Mass Killings in Eastern DR Congo' (13 November 2012) < https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2012/11/un-report-exposes-mass-killings-eastern-dr-congo> accessed 19 November 2025.

In South Kivu, the hauts plateaux of Minembwe and Itombwe became epicentres of violence[59]. Over the past decade, dozens of villages inhabited by Banyamulenge civilians were burned, their homes razed, livestock stolen or slaughtered, and surviving civilians forced into displacement sites[60]. Such attacks were often accompanied by declarations that the region must be "cleansed" of Tutsi presence, indicating not only political hostility but a systematic attempt to remove a population from its historical homeland. The repetition of such attacks across multiple localities and over many years illustrates the entrenched and organised nature of the violence.

5.3. Cycles of Displacement and the Destruction of Tutsi Livelihoods

Displacement has been one of the most enduring consequences of anti-tutsi violence. The removal of Tutsi communities from strategic areas has had cumulative effects: loss of property, loss of citizenship documents, and the erosion of social and political rights[61]. Many Banyamulenge villages have been rebuilt multiple times after repeated attacks, only to be destroyed again. Displacement sites around Minembwe, Bijombo, Mikenge, and Uvira are populated by civilians who have been uprooted three or four times in a single decade[62]. In North Kivu, Tutsi families who fled to Goma or Rwanda remain unable to return to their land due

[59]ibid.

[60]J J Mutambo, 'Les Banyamulenge: Qui sont-ils? D'où viennent-ils? Quel rôle ont-ils joué (et pourquoi) dans le processus de la libération du Zaïre?' (1997) *Les Banyamulenge* (Kinshasa, Imprimerie Saint Paul) 41.

[61]Judith Verweijen, Juvénal Twaibu, Moïse Ribakare, Paul Bulambo and Freddy Mwambi Kasongo, *Mayhem in the Mountains: How Violent Conflict on the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu Escalated* (Governance in Conflict Network, Ghent University, Insecure Livelihoods Series, April 2021) 50-54.

[62]ibid.

to the presence of FDLR and allied militias[63]. Even in relatively calm periods, returning Tutsis are frequently denied access to customary chiefs or subjected to harassment by local authorities who question their citizenship[64]. The systematic targeting of cattle—often involving the theft or killing of hundreds of animals at a time—is an economic strategy aimed at dismantling Tutsi survival structures[65]. Violence against livelihoods therefore functions as a slow-moving genocidal mechanism by rendering communities economically unsustainable.

5.4. Institutional Exclusion and Denial of Citizenship

Alongside physical violence, Tutsi communities face persistent institutionalised discrimination. Administrative authorities frequently deny them identity documents, voter registration, and land titles, effectively rendering them stateless within their own country[66]. Even when the law formally recognises their citizenship, local officials often reinterpret or ignore legal provisions[67]. This bureaucratic marginalisation is not merely a legal inconvenience; it is a form of structural violence that reinforces the notion that Tutsis do not belong[68]. Citizenship denial has repeatedly been used to justify attacks on Tutsi populations, with local leaders arguing—despite historical evidence—that Tutsis are Rwandan nationals with no claim to Congolese territory[69]. This administrative practice,

[63]ibid.

[64]Davey (n 54) 77.

[65]Judith Verweijen and Justine Brabant, 'Cows and guns: Cattle-related conflict and armed violence in Fizi and Itombwe, eastern DR Congo' (2017) 55(1) *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1-27.

[66]Vlassenroot (n 12) 29.

[67]Judith Verweijen and Koen Vlassenroot, 'Armed Mobilisation and the Nexus of Territory, Identity, and Authority: the Contested Territorial Aspirations of the Banyamulenge in Eastern DR Congo' (2015) 33(2) *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 191–212.

[68]ibid.

[69]Davey (n 54) 77.

coupled with public hostility, creates a context in which massacres are interpreted not as crimes but as the "defence of the nation."

5.5. Documentation by International Organisations and Human Rights Actors

The persistent targeting of Tutsi communities has been extensively documented by human rights organisations, UN agencies, and regional monitors. The 2010 UN Mapping Report identified multiple massacres between 1996 and 2003 that could, if proven in a competent court, constitute acts of genocide against Tutsis[70]. Subsequent reports by MONUSCO and the UN Group of Experts have highlighted the cyclical nature of attacks on Tutsi civilians, the involvement of armed groups such as FDLR, Mai-Mai coalitions, and local defence militias, and the pattern of cross-border manipulation by political entrepreneurs[71]. Human Rights Watch, Refugees International, and investigative journalists have similarly chronicled targeted killings, forced disappearances, ethnically motivated sexual violence, and hate speech campaigns. Despite this extensive documentation, political will—both domestically and internationally—to recognise the pattern as genocidal remains limited.

5.6. Continuity of Violence from 2010 to the Present

The period from 2010 to 2025 has witnessed a renewed intensification of violence, particularly in South Kivu's hauts plateaux. Armed coalitions such as Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke, Twigwaneho splinter units, Red-Tabara collaborators, and factions aligned with FDLR have coordinated attacks that exhibit

[70] *Report of the Mapping Exercise* (n 8).

[71] See *Final Report by the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (UN Doc S/2023/990, 30 December 2023) < https://prod.cdn-medias.theafricareport.com/medias/2023/06/22/un-drc-report-final.pdf > accessed 19 November 2025.

clear patterns of targeted violence: burning of homesteads, siege of cattle enclosures, roadblock executions, and direct assaults on displacement camps[72]. The rhetoric surrounding these attacks frequently invokes the language of extermination and purity, with slogans calling for the eradication of Tutsi presence from the highlands[73]. Simultaneously, online hate speech has proliferated, bridging rural violence with urban political discourse and creating a nationwide ideological environment that normalises the marginalisation of Tutsi communities[74]. This period demonstrates that anti-tutsi violence is not episodic or incidental; it is a continuous project reinforced by historical narratives, militarised propaganda, and state inaction.

6. Role of the State and Armed Groups

6.1. State Complicity, Fragmentation, and the Politics of Neglect

The Congolese state has played a complex and often contradictory role in the perpetuation of violence against Tutsi communities[75]. While official discourse sometimes asserts the need for national unity and ethnic harmony, state institutions have frequently demonstrated partiality, neglect, or active complicity[76].

The weakness of the central government, combined with entrenched patronage networks, has produced a governance

[72]Ndahinda (n 38)

[73]James Ngamije, *Anti-Tutsi Hate Crime and Land Conflicts in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Historical Misrepresentations and Current Implications* (25 September 2025) < https://ssrn.com/abstract=5533200 > accessed 23 November 2025.

[74]ibid.

[75]Schouten P, *Violence and Fragmentation in Congo's Political Marketplace* (Conflict Research Programme, London School of Economics and Political Science 2021) 24.

[76]ibid.

environment in which local officials possess substantial autonomy[77]. In many instances, these officials endorse or overlook attacks against Tutsi civilians, often rationalising violence through the narrative that Tutsis are "foreigners" with questionable loyalty[78]. The securitisation of Tutsi identity—portraying communities as potential insurgents—has allowed elements within the security apparatus to justify discriminatory practices, targeted arrests, and denial of protection. This bureaucratic and coercive posture has, over time, reinforced the ideological framework upon which violent actors rely.

6.2. Partnerships Between FARDC Elements and Anti-tutsi Militias

One of the most persistent drivers of anti-tutsi violence has been the strategic collaboration between segments of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and local or foreign-armed groups with explicit anti-tutsi agendas[79]. Numerous reports indicate that FARDC units have, at various times, coordinated operations with the FDLR or with Mai-Mai factions hostile to Tutsi communities[80]. These alliances may be motivated by tactical expediency—such as sharing intelligence, reinforcing territorial control, or countering rival armed groups—but their consequences are devastating for civilian populations[81]. When state forces collaborate with groups espousing exterminatory rhetoric, they lend institutional legitimacy to ideologies that

[77]Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *'DRC: UN report raises spectre of war crimes and crimes against humanity in North and South Kivu'* (5 Sept 2025) < https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/drc-un-report-raises-spectre-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-north#:~:text=GENEVA%20%2D%20All%20parties%20to%20the,Office%20report%20published%20on%20Friday. > accessed 19 November 2025.

[78]ibid.

[79]IGIHE, 'New report accuses FARDC of collaboration with FDLR' < https://en.igihe.com/news/article/new-report-accuses-fardc-of-collaboration-with-fdlr> accessed 18 November 2025.

[80]ibid.

[81]ibid.

would otherwise be relegated to the periphery[82]. FARDC's failure to discipline or prosecute soldiers implicated in attacks against Tutsi civilians further institutionalises impunity, signalling that such actions fall within an acceptable range of behaviour.

6.4. Ideological Instrumentalisation for Political Gain

Political manipulation of ethnic identity is a longstanding feature of Congolese politics. Anti-tutsi rhetoric has repeatedly served as a tool for political elites seeking to mobilise supporters, weaken competitors, or create leverage in negotiations with regional actors[83]. Electoral campaigns in several provinces have included inflammatory statements portraying Tutsis as agents of foreign plots or as beneficiaries of a hidden geopolitical project[84]. Such rhetoric does not merely precede violence; it actively shapes the moral and political climate that enables it. By amplifying narratives of threat and infiltration, politicians create an atmosphere in which militias feel authorised to act and civilians interpret violence as patriotic defence[85]. This instrumentalisation of ideology reveals that the persistence of anti-tutsi violence cannot be understood solely through the motivations of armed groups; it is embedded in broader political dynamics shaped by elite incentives.

6.5. Armed Groups as Ideological Producers and Enforcers

Although political elites play a central role in shaping ideology, armed groups are the primary actors translating ideology into

[82]ibid.

[83]Markoutsas N, *Colonial Legacies, Tribalism, and Democratization in the D.R. Congo: A Path Dependency Analysis* (Master's thesis, Dalarna University, 4 June 2025) 5.

[84]Pierre Englebert, 'Aspirations and Realities in Africa: The DRC's Electoral Sideshow' (2019) 30(3) *Journal of Democracy* 124, 125.

[85]Khuswatun Hasanah, 'Ethnicity Issues as a Political Mobilization Instrument of Cornelis MH in 2007 West Kalimantan Direct Elections' (2018) 3(2) *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* 266–272.

systematic violence. The FDLR, as the ideological heir to the Rwandan génocidaires, remains the most consequential. Through local alliances, taxation regimes, and propaganda campaigns, they have deeply influenced community perceptions, framing Tutsis as existential enemies[86]. Mai-Mai groups in South Kivu similarly present themselves as defenders of "autochthonous" communities, positioning Tutsi populations as invaders whose removal is essential to securing land and identity[87]. These groups enforce ideological boundaries not only through killings but also through social practices such as cattle theft, the imposition of discriminatory taxes, and the enforced segregation of communities. Violence thus becomes a method of governance in militia-controlled areas, whereby the ideological project is embedded in everyday economic and social life.

7. International Silence and Complicity

7.1. Failure of International Actors to Recognise Genocidal Patterns

Despite extensive documentation by UN agencies, human rights organisations, and academic researchers, the international community has consistently failed to recognise the targeting of Congolese Tutsis as genocidal in nature[88]. This reluctance is partly rooted in geopolitical sensitivities surrounding Rwanda's regional role, partly in the complexity of the Congolese conflict, and partly in institutional inertia within international organisations[89].

[86]ibid.

[87]ibid.

[88]Amnesty International, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: The Massacre of Refugees at Kibati* (Index No AFR 62/025/1998) < https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr620251998en.pdf > accessed 21 November 2025.

[89]Human Rights Watch, *"World Report 2025: Democratic Republic of Congo | Country Chapters"* (2025) <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo#:~:text=In%20March%2C%20after%20being%20convicted%20on%20charges,and%20reporter%20for%20Jeune%20Afrique%2C%20was%20released. > accessed 20 November 2025.

The reluctance to name the violence as genocide has profound implications: it deprives targeted communities of international protection, obscures the ideological continuity from 1994, and normalises the exclusion of Tutsi populations within policy debates. International silence effectively legitimises the status quo, allowing local actors to continue perpetrating violence without fear of external intervention.

Despite repeated appeals to United Nations mechanisms, the European Union, regional organizations, and judicial authorities, no effective protection has been afforded to the besieged Banyamulenge population[90]. It is also noteworthy that these attacks coincide with developments in regional peace negotiations in Washington and Doha, with their perpetrators appearing indifferent to the diplomatic efforts underway[91]. As I write this, the continued encirclement of the community and the obstruction of essential supplies by Burundian and Congolese forces, as well as by irregular armed groups, have created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. When these events are considered alongside the longstanding pattern of ethnic eradication and the evident intention to prevent the Banyamulenge community from remaining on its ancestral lands, the actions in question may be understood as part of an ongoing genocidal process targeting Tutsi populations in eastern DRC.

The deliberate starvation of a population likewise constitutes a method of extermination (see Annex 1 for further details). In an interview with BBC Gahuzamiryango, the spokesperson for the Burundian army, General Baratuza Gaspar, stated that the

[90]Council of the European Union, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest escalation in eastern DRC* (Press Release, 25 January 2025) < https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/01/25/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-latest-escalation-in-eastern-drc/#:~:text=2025%2000:10-,Democratic%20Republic%20of%20the%20Congo:%20Statement%20by%20the%20High%20Representative,the%20Luanda%20and%20Nairobi%20processes. > accessed 19 November 2025.

[91]ibid.

Burundian National Defence Forces "are besieging Minembwe," on the grounds that civilians residing there allegedly collaborate with "the enemy" (sic)[92]. This statement amounts to an explicit acknowledgment of a grave violation of international humanitarian law, which obliges all parties to a conflict to make a strict distinction between civilians and military objectives[93]. According to credible field sources and multiple direct testimonies from victims, drones deployed by Kinshasa's forces, in coordination with the Burundian military, bombed the Banyamulenge civilian village of Mikenke on 15 November 2025, followed by a strike on the village of Rwitsankuku on 17 November—only days after the ceasefire between Kinshasa and the AFC was signed in Doha.

7.2. UN Peacekeeping and the Politics of Limited Mandates

MONUSCO, despite being one of the UN's largest peacekeeping missions, has been constrained by its mandate, political considerations, and operational limitations[94]. The mission has repeatedly documented anti-tutsi violence but has struggled to prevent attacks or provide adequate protection to vulnerable communities[95]. In several instances, peacekeepers have withdrawn

[92]Jesca Mutamba,'How urundiantroopsin South Kivusparkedadistincthumanitarian crisis amid DR Congo's wider war' (The New Times, 15 November 2025)<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/31279/news/africa/how-burundian-troops-in-south-kivu-sparked-a-distinct-humanitarian-crisis-amid-dr-congos-wider-war > accessed 19 November 2025.

[93]'Burundian Troops in South Kivu and Humanitarian Crisis' (Africa-Press – Rwanda, 16 November 2025) < https://www.africa-press.net/rwanda/all-news/burundian-troops-in-south-kivu-and-humanitarian-crisis > accessed 19 November 2025.

[94]Hugo de Vries, *Going around in circles: The challenges of peacekeeping and stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', August 2015) 25.

[95]Natasja Rupesinghe, *How Can Peacekeepers Strengthen Their Engagement with Local Communities? Opportunities and Challenges in the Field* (NUPI Policy Brief No 30/2016) < https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/NUPI-How%20Can%20Peacekeepers%20Strengthen%20their%20Engagement%20with%20Local%20Communities.pdf > accessed 19 November 2025.

from volatile areas despite warnings of impending massacres, citing insufficient capacity or restrictive engagement rules[96]. The peacekeeping mission's inability to confront groups such as the FDLR—sometimes due to the Congolese government's political alliances—has further eroded its legitimacy in the eyes of Tutsi communities. The international presence has therefore oscillated between passive observation and symbolic engagement, neither of which has altered the structural determinants of violence.

7.3. Regional Geopolitics and the Weaponisation of Narratives

A further obstacle to meaningful intervention is the weaponisation of anti-tutsi narratives in regional politics. Several actors within the Great Lakes region have used allegations of Tutsi expansionism to advance their own strategic ambitions[97]. These geopolitical narratives reverberate through the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and bilateral relations among neighbouring states[98]. International donors, wary of being drawn into regional rivalries, often adopt a posture of neutrality that inadvertently reinforces the dominant narratives within the DRC. The failure to interrogate or challenge these narratives contributes to a discursive environment in which genocidal ideology appears legitimate, contested only by those facing its direct consequences.

7.4. Humanitarian Actors and the Depoliticisation of Violence

Humanitarian organisations, despite providing essential services, often reinforce depoliticised interpretations of the conflict by

[96]ibid.

[97]René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Cambridge University Press 1996) 87.

[98]Gérard Prunier, "The Geopolitical Situation in the Great Lakes Area in Light of the Kivu Crisis" (WRITENET / Refworld, 1 February 1997) < https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/writenet/1997/en/95462 > accessed 18 November 2025.

framing violence in terms of "intercommunal tensions" or "resource disputes"[99]. This language obscures the targeted nature of attacks against Tutsis and dilutes the ideological dimension of the violence. By treating all communities as equally vulnerable, humanitarian discourse inadvertently erases the asymmetrical risks faced by Tutsi populations and fails to capture the structural intent driving attacks[100]. The absence of precise terminology—particularly the avoidance of terms such as "ethnic cleansing" or "genocidal intent"—limits the political impact of humanitarian reporting and contributes to international apathy.

8. Resilience and Resistance of Tutsi Communities

8.1. Survival Strategies and Community Organisation

Despite decades of targeted violence, Tutsi communities in Eastern Congo have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Local structures—ranging from informal defence groups to extended family networks—have provided protection, distributed resources, and preserved communal identity. The reconstruction of destroyed villages, sometimes multiple times within a decade, is a testament to the communities' determination to maintain their territorial presence. Many Banyamulenge groups have developed strategies of decentralised survival, dispersing families across multiple locations to mitigate the risk of total annihilation during attacks[101].

[99]Yahya Chowdhury, 'Intersectional Insights into the DRC-Rwanda Conflict' (Research Essay, Professor Goldberg, World Politics, April 7, 2025) < https://dc.cod.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1159&context=srs > accessed 20 November 2025.

[100]ibid.

[101]Liam Mahony, *Non-Military Strategies for Civilian Protection in the DRC* (Fieldview Solutions for the Norwegian Refugee Council March 2013) 3< https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/non-military-strategies-for-civilian-protection-in-the-drc.pdf#:~:text=A%20second%20and%20more%20immediate%20level%20of,a%20protective%20as%20well%20as%20peacemaking%20impact.> accessed 20 November 2025.

These practices highlight a form of resistance grounded not in armed confrontation but in the persistence of everyday life.

8.2. Documentation, Advocacy, and Diaspora Mobilisation

In recent years, Tutsi diaspora communities have played an increasingly important role in documenting atrocities, raising awareness, and advocating for international recognition of the violence[102]. Social media platforms have become vital spaces for archiving testimonies, sharing images of destroyed villages, and exposing hate speech. Independent researchers, diaspora-led organisations, and local human rights defenders have compiled extensive evidence that challenges state narratives and brings greater visibility to the targeted nature of the violence. This activism is part of a broader struggle to counter erasure, reclaim historical narratives, and assert collective rights within a hostile political environment.

8.3. The Cultural and Symbolic Dimensions of Resistance

Resistance is not only material but symbolic. Tutsi communities maintain cultural practices, linguistic traditions, and pastoralist livelihoods despite sustained efforts to disrupt them[103]. The preservation of cultural identity in the face of ideological hostility constitutes a form of symbolic defiance, refusing the narrative they are foreigners without legitimate claims to Congolese nationality[104].

---

[102]Chiara De Franco and Christoph O. Meyer, 'Media and Mass Atrocity Prevention: Three Pathways of Potential Influence' (2025) 17(4) *Global Responsibility to Protect* 288–319.

[103]Sabrina Nelson, 'The World Must Stop Neglecting the D.R.Congo' (Genocide Watch, 9 August 2024)<https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/the-world-must-stop-neglecting-the-drc#:~:text=Attacks%20by%20the%20M23%20rebels,suffering%20of%20millions%20of%20Congolese. > accessed 20 November 2025.

[104]ibid.

Their continued presence in ancestral territories, despite repeated displacement, challenges the ideological premise of eradication and asserts a counter-narrative of belonging rooted in history, culture, and memory.

9. Conclusion

The ideology targeting Tutsi populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo is neither a recent phenomenon nor a set of isolated prejudices. It is a historical, political, and ideological project that began long before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda but was transformed by it. The migration of genocidal actors into Eastern Congo, the formation of the FDLR, and the incorporation of exterminatory narratives into Congolese political discourse created a regionalised system of violence that persists today[105]. Anti-tutsi ideology functions as a political technology that organises exclusion, justifies territorial claims, and normalises violence. It is reproduced across state institutions, armed groups, community structures, and international narratives, creating a comprehensive environment in which Tutsi civilians remain uniquely vulnerable. The ongoing violence cannot be understood solely as a by-product of resource conflict or state collapse. Its targeted nature, ideological coherence, and continuity over nearly three decades indicate a deeper logic consistent with genocidal intent. The failure of the international community to recognise, name, or confront this intent has emboldened perpetrators and contributed to a climate of impunity. Meanwhile, Tutsi communities continue to exhibit extraordinary resilience through cultural preservation, local self-defence, and diaspora-led advocacy, yet resilience alone cannot substitute for justice, recognition, or protection.

[105]Davey (n 54) 77.

For genuine transformation, a shift is required in how the violence is conceptualised and addressed. Recognising the ideological dimension is essential for understanding both the past and the present. Without confronting the ideological foundations of anti-tutsihostility—its colonial origins, political uses, and contemporary manifestations—the structural drivers of violence will remain intact. A just and lasting peace in Eastern Congo will require more than military operations or humanitarian interventions; it will demand historical recognition, political accountability, and the dismantling of the discursive frameworks that render Tutsi lives expendable.

10. Appendices

Some of the hundreds of cases of serious human rights violations against the Tutsi, Banyamulenge and Hema communities in the DRC

This table lists numerous cases of serious human rights violations against the Tutsi, Banyamulenge, and Hema communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It provides details such as the date, location, victims, accused parties, and a brief description of each incident, ranging from bombings, extrajudicial killings, torture, and forced disappearances to assaults by armed groups and military forces. The table highlights atrocities including massacres, lynchings, and ethnic targeting, often with no subsequent investigations or accountability, and underscores the ongoing persecution of these communities in various regions of the DRC.

Table 2: Serious Human Rights Violations Against the Banyamulenge and Tuts of North-Communities in the DRC. Some of the hundreds of cases of serious human rights violations against the Tutsi, Banyamulenge and Hema communities in the DRC Appendices

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
1.	August 27 to 28, 2025	Rugezi	Many people were killed, others injured, and a village was destroyed	FARDC+ Burundian troop and Wazalendo Militias +FDLR	On the night of August 27 to 28, 2025, they bombed the village of Rugezi making Civilian casualties,
2.	August 29, 2025	Mikenke, murombwe an	Many people were killed, others injured, and 3 villages were destroyed	FARDC + Burundian troops Militias +	On the evening of August 29, 2025, between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., three villages were Bombed, Mikenke, Nyamurombwe and Rugezi once again.
3.	August 30, 2025	FARDC camp in Karunga	Many people were killed, others wounded, including a FARDC major		On 31 August 2025, drones, again in pairs, flew over the Rurambo area and, in the evening, they mistakenly bombed a FARDC camp in Karunga, believing it to be the Banyamulenge. The resulted in several casualties, including a major.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
4.	June 17, 2025	Bijombo	Mr. Singaye Marebo	Militias + FARDC + Burundian troops	Arrested, tortured and executed. The killing follows the 2018 killing of his brother, Muco Marebo, who was killed during the July 1 attack on the village of Kagogo by the same group, which included Mai-Mai and Red Tabara elements.
5.	June 20, 2025	Murambya	Six civilians (including Serugo, in critical condition)	Militias targeting Tutsi/ Banyamulenge	Brutal torture systematically targeting members of the Tutsi/Banyamulenge community solely based on their ethnicity or appearance.
6.	December 9, 2021	Lweba, Fizi territory, South Kivu	Major Kaminzobe Joseph (Munyamulenge)	Wazalendo youth, in the presence of the FARDC	Lynching burned and cannibalized, in the presence of soldiers who did not intervene. He was Munyamulenge and served under the Congolese flag.
7.	June 2021	Minembwe	1. Nantabara Nantonesha 2. Namuhoza Viviane, 3. Royi Nagabiro, 4. Nagaju Veronique	FARDC	The FARDC attacked Banyamulenge women during a peaceful sit-in against arbitrary arrests. The operation, ordered by Generals Patrick Opia and Philemon Yav, led to the assassination of four women on June 30, 2021

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
8.	October 11, 2022	Monyi	Ndagara (75 years old)	May-May with FARDC complicity	The Mai-Mai, with the complicity of the FARDC, attacked Banyamulenge villages. A 75-year-old man, Ndagara, was killed and hundreds of cows looted.
9.	October 9, 2022	Minembwe	Mugaza (14 years old)	FARDC	The FARDC attacked and killed a 14-year-old Munyamulenge boy, Mugaza, after mutilating his hand
10.	November 6, 2021	Baraka	Mr. Ruben Rushika	FARDC and Babembe leaders affiliated with the Wazalendo	Mr. Ruben Rushika, a Munyamulenge teacher, was assassinated by FARDC and Babembe leaders affiliated with the Wazalendo.
11.	14–15 June 2022	–	Lt-Col Antoine Bageni Nsabimana (FARDC)	Congolese Police	Lt-Col Antoine Bageni Nsabimana (FARDC) was violently arrested by Congolese police because of his Tutsi appearance. Videos showed FARDC mistreating Tutsi, and secret detentions by the ANR were reported.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
12.	June 18, 2022	Kinshasa	Senior Police Officer	–	A senior police officer testified to a hunt for Rwandophones on the Avenue du Commerce.
13.	June 20, 2022	Kalima	Mr. Semutobo (Tutsi Munyamulenge)	FARDC	Mr. Semutobo, a Munyamulenge Tutsi, was killed, roasted and cannibalized in front of FARDC soldiers.
14.	April 18, 2020	Kivumu	Two women	Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke + FARDC	The FARDC-backed Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke tortured, mutilated and killed two women.
15.	July 12, 2021	Minembwe Centre	Angelina	FARDC	Mrs. Angelina was murdered by the FARDC for being Munyamulenge.
16.	13 April – 14 May 2024	Goma/ Kinshasa	Major Ndizeye Thomas (Banyamulenge)	–	Death in custody in Kinshasa after arrest

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
17.	February 13, 2021 – May 9, 2022	Minembwe/ Kinshasa	Muragwa Happiness	–	Muragwa Bonheur died as a result of torture, starvation and lack of medical care in prison.
18.	December 21, 2023	Walungu	Bigege Nkurunziza	Young Wazalendo	Officer Bigege Nkurunziza was beaten by young Wazalendo in front of his colleagues. No investigation has been opened.
19.	November 9, 2023	Goma	Captain Gisore Rukatura Patrick (Kabongo)	Wazalendo	Captain Gisore Rukatura Patrick (alias Kabongo) was lynched and burned by Wazalendo. No investigation.
20.	November 11, 2023	–	Cousin of Captain Gisore (FARDC)	–	Captain Gisore's cousin, also a FARDC soldier, was pulled out of a vehicle and beaten to death. No investigation.
21.	March 12 – December 11, 2023	Uvira	Colonel Muruta Fizi	Wazalendo	Colonel Muruta Fizi was beaten at home by Wazalendo and then arrested. No investigation.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
22.	March 24, 2024	Beni	Major Kigabo Eric	His escort	Major Kigabo Eric was executed by his escort. He had been threatened with being «Rwandan».
23.	October 4, 2011	–	Seven Banyamulenge humanitarians (Eben-Ezer mission)	Mai-Mai Yakutumba + FARDC	The Mai-Mai Yakutumba and the FARDC killed seven Banyamulenge aid workers from the Eben-Ezer Evangelical Mission.
24.	June 15, 2023	Goma	Captain Mukesha Bustro Alexis	Colleagues	Captain Mukesha Bustro Alexis was tortured by his colleagues. No investigation.
25.	July 31, 2023	Kinshasa	Major Ngabo Patrick	–	Major Ngabo Patrick died in prison for lack of care, after more than a year in detention for not paying a bribe.
26.	August 9, 2023	Kinshasa	Officer Ndaruhutse Gilbert	–	Officer Ndaruhutse Gilbert narrowly escaped a lynching. No investigation.
27.	February 7, 2023	Goma	Major Sehogo Senga Masengo	Militia	Major Sehogo Senga Masengo was attacked by militiamen. No arrests.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
28.	February 20, 2024	Bugamba/ Nyiragongo	Officer Kazungu (Kamuzungu)	–	Officer Kazungu (Kamuzungu) was lynched and burned. No investigation.
29.	March 17, 2024	Goma	Officer Sebandore Sengiyinva Jean-Luc	Militia	Officer Sebandore Sengiyinva Jean-Luc was beaten and burned alive by militiamen. No investigation.
30.	March 25, 2024	Prison de Makala	Captain Mugenzi Egide	–	Captain Mugenzi Egide, in critical condition, was tortured and deprived of medical care.
31.	March 26, 2024	Bunia	Colonel Theo Gakuru	FPIC Chini ya Kilima	Colonel Theo Gakuru was almost killed by the FPIC group Chini ya Kilima, accused of being a "Rwandan infiltrator". No investigation.
Hate speech and xenophobia in the DRC					
1.	July 19, 2023	Television	–	MP Justin Bitakwira	MP Justin Bitakwira said on television: "A Tutsi is a criminal by birth." The EU sanctioned it in 2022.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
2.	October 24, 2022	Canada	–	Martin Fayulu	Martin Fayulu denied the Congolese identity of the Banyamulenge on the basis of language.
3.	Until 2021	–	–	Honoré N'Gbanda	Honoré N'Gbanda, former head of Mobutu's secret service, described the Tutsis as «invaders».
4.	In progress	–	–	Journalist Kwebe Kimpele	Journalist Kwebe Kimpele denies the Congolese nationality of the Tutsis.
5.	November 30, 2019	Baraka (Fizi)	–	MP Omer Bulakali	MP Omer Bulakali called for a mobilization against the Banyamulenge.
6.	Undated	–	–	Member of Parliament Freddy Musambya	MP Freddy Musambya accused the Banyamulenge of aggression and criticized their presence in the army.
7.	January 8, 2023	Luvungi	–	Deputy Claude Misare	MP Claude Misare encouraged civilians to arm themselves with machetes to fight the Banyamulenge.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
8.	Undated	–	–	André Mashaka Byadunia	André Mashaka Byadunia has incited protests and land claims against the Banyamulenge.
9.	Undated	Goma	–	General Aba Van Ang	General Aba Van Ang urged the people of Goma to arm themselves against the «Rwandan enemies».
10.	November 24, 2024	Goma	–	Minister of Justice Constant Mutamba	Justice Minister Constant Mutamba called for the execution of «Rwandan Tutsi collaborators».
11.	August 1998	–	–	Vice-President Yerodia Ndombasi	Vice President Yerodia Ndombasi has called the Tutsi «germs to be eradicated,» inciting massacres and cannibalism.
12.	January and July 2023	–	–	Minister Nzangi and MP Bitakwira	Minister Nzangi and MP Bitakwira made xenophobic remarks denying the Congolese identity of the Tutsis.

No	DATE	PLACE	VICTIMS	ACCUSED	DESCRIPTION
13.	December 2024	–	–	President Tshisekedi	State of the Nation address: President Tshisekedi has repeated allusions to the «great replacement» theory, fueling hatred.
14.	November 9, 2023	Goma	Captain Rukatura	–	Captain Rukatura was lynched for being a Tutsi, in front of his colleagues.
15.	February 7, 2024	Sake, Kimoka Center	Irakoze Ngabo Manu	APCLS and FDLR	Irakoze Ngabo Manu was beheaded by the APCLS and the FDLR. The video circulated online. No investigation.
16.	August 16, 2024	Misisi, South Kivu	Manirakiza Seruvumba Bonfils	Wazalendo	Manirakiza Seruvumba Bonfils was killed, burned and cannibalized by Wazalendo elements.

Who could stop the genocide of Rwandophone Tutsi in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Author: Hon. Antoine Mugesera, Member of Rwanda Elders Advisory Forum

ABSTRACT



This article analyzes the situation of Rwandophone Tutsi populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the violence they face. It examines the responsibilities of the Congolese authorities, the international community, and regional organizations in addressing the risks of serious crimes against these populations. The author highlights the role of hate speech, attacks, and threats to their security. The article calls for urgent action to prevent any escalation that could lead to genocide.

Biography: Hon. Antoine Mugesera has held several positions of responsibility in Rwanda's public life. He notably served as a Senator and has been a member of various boards of directors and commissions. He is a member of the Rwanda Elders Advisory Forum and has served in different civil society organizations, including as President of Ibuka. Through these roles, he has contributed to initiatives related to governance, memory, and civic engagement in Rwanda.

Academically, Antoine Mugesera is also involved in research and intellectual reflection. He has participated in scholarly work and academic discussions on Rwanda's contemporary history, the memory of the genocide, and broader societal issues. His contributions are part of a broader effort to promote research, knowledge sharing, and academic dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the 80th Anniversary of the United Nations, on September 24, 2025, His Excellency President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) delivered a speech in which he declared that a "silent genocide" is taking place in his country. However, he did not explicitly state against whom this genocide is directed, since it is not the entire Congolese population that is under threat. Instead, he referred to massacres that have recently occurred in the northern part of North Kivu Province.

No fewer than five days earlier, on September 19, 2025, the Congo River Alliance (AFD/M23) had issued a communiqué informing both the national and international public that "the terrorist regime in Kinshasa has perpetrated massacres and committed war crimes of extreme gravity." The communiqué denounced "ethnic cleansing and the spread of hate speech from Uvira in South Kivu." The Alliance solemnly pledged "to protect and defend its people relentlessly and to eliminate any threat at its source." It firmly condemned "the guilty and complicit silence of the international community, humanitarian organizations, and human rights defenders, who stand by as mere spectators to the massacre of our compatriots."

Thus, we are confronted with references to a "silent genocide" on one hand and "ethnic cleansing" on the other both within the same country. From these two declarations, one thing is certain: a threat of genocide looms over one or more ethnic groups in eastern DRC. In the following lines, we will attempt to clarify matters, being more precise than President Tshisekedi.

The group facing the threat of genocide in eastern DRC is not one of the many tribes' livings there such as the Nande, Kumu, Nyanga, Hunde, Tembo, Havu, Shi, Furero, Bembe, or Lega but rather the Rwandophone communities, specifically the Congolese Tutsi known as the Banyarwanda and the Banyamulenge. It is upon these two groups that a genuine threat of genocide weighs,

and indeed preliminary massacres have already been carried out against them as ominous warning signs. We will highlight these revealing indicators. But first, let us trace the history of the Banyarwanda, or Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi of this region, before showing how certain conditions conducive to genocide against them have gradually taken shape until now, when this genocide has become imminent.

1. Before the creation of Congo, Rwandophone groups lived in the region

Before colonization, the Congo as a state did not yet exist. It was only created by King Leopold II of Belgium, and its existence was confirmed by the General Act of the Berlin Conference on February 26, 1885[106]. Within its present-day borders, particularly in the eastern region known today as Kivu, there were various tribes spread from north to south across the province.

It is important to note that a significant portion of this area then belonged to the Kingdom of Rwanda. Its inhabitants were subjects of the Rwandan king. This was the case at least since the 18th century, for before colonization, part of North Kivu was politically and administratively dependent on Rwanda. Evidence of this includes King Rwabugiri's herd of cattle, known as Imisagara, kept in the region, and the burial site of King Rutalindwa of Rwanda at Tongo. Some even claim that King Musinga was born there.

1.1. North Kivu

The portion of North Kivu that belonged to Rwanda roughly corresponds to the present-day territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, and Goma. Rwanda conquered these areas around the 1750s and

[106]The present-day DRC has borne several successive names as follows: Congo Free State (1885–1908), Belgian Congo (1908–1960), Republic of the Congo / Kinshasa (1960–1964), Democratic Republic of Congo (1964–1971), Republic of Zaire (1971–1997), Democratic Republic of Congo (1997–to the present day, 2025).

extended its influence as far as Lake Rwicanzige, later renamed Lake Edward by the colonial administration. This influence also included part of present-day Kalehe in central Kivu. Until 1923, the chiefs of these territories were appointed by the King of Rwanda. Rutshuru is a notable example: chiefs Kabango and Nshizirungu, along with their deputies Ntamuhanga and Bikamiro, served as representatives of the Rwandan king until they were deposed by the colonial authorities in 1923. They were replaced by Daniel Ndeze, a Rwandan from Ruhengeri. Formerly a servant, Ndeze had learned Lingala and Kiswahili while imprisoned in Stanleyville, languages that facilitated his rise within the colonial administration[107]. From a simple peasant, he became a "mwami" a title mistranslated as "king" in French. In Congo, mwami refers to a tribal chief, whereas elsewhere "king" denotes the head of a monarchy.

1.2. Gishari: Autonomous Chiefdom of the Banyarwanda

The provinces of Gishari and Kamuronsi, abolished in 1921, were also part of North Kivu territories historically tributary to Rwanda, alongside Rutshuru, Goma, and parts of Kalehe and Walikale. Gishari was detached from Rwanda in 1911, along with Bwishya, Jomba, Kamuronsi, Byahi, and Idjui Island[108]. That same year, Belgian authorities entrusted the new chiefdom of Gishari and Kamuronsi to André Kalinda of the Hunde tribe, though it continued to be regarded as dependent on Rwanda[109].

Even after colonization, Gishari populated mainly by Banyarwanda was often referred to as the "chiefdom of the Banyarwanda." In 1936, plans were made to create two independent Banyarwanda chiefdoms: Gishari in Masisi and

[107]DR Gaston Rwasamanzi, *Masisi et les Banyarwanda, Histoire, stigmates et espérance*, Rwasamanzi publisher, 2025, p.28-29.
[108]Dr. Gaston Rwasamanzi, op. cit. p.48.
[109]Idem, p.29.

Bwito in Rutshuru[110]. Gishari was officially established as an autonomous Banyarwanda chiefdom in September 1940, with Joseph Bideri[111] as its first chief. Before him, the abatware (delegates of the Rwandan king) included Ntazimira, a general under King Kigeli VI Rwabugiri, and Nyirimigabo, his cousin and battalion commander. Later chiefs such as Semugeshi, Rwubusisi, and Bideri himself were appointed with the king's consent during the colonial era[112]. In 1939, Wilfrid Bucyanayandi (known as Bucyana), grandson of Ntazimira, was appointed chief by the colonial authorities without consulting King Rudahigwa. Bucyana was known for his strained relations with Rudahigwa, to whom he once said, "Niwima nzimuka" ("If you become king, I will leave Rwanda"). The last Rwandan royal delegate in the region was Rulenga (or Lurenga) of the Abasinga clan. Others included Ntamuhanga of the Abungura clan, deposed by the colonials in the early 20th century. These two were Hutu, while Kabango, the king's delegate in Busanza, was a Tutsi of the Basinga clan. Rugaju, cousin of King Rwogera and the first delegate in the volcanic region of Bwisha, was a Tutsi of the Abega clan[113].

1.3. North Kivu governed by the King of Rwanda

From these examples, it is clear that before Belgian colonization and even during much of it the Mwami of Rwanda, through his delegates (abatware), exercised authority over parts of North Kivu. These delegates included both Hutu and Tutsi. Over time, however, Belgian colonization gradually abolished the Banyarwanda chiefdoms in North Kivu, stripping the Rwandan

[110]Aloys Tegera Buseyi, *Les Banyarwanda du Nord -Kivu (RDC), Histoire d'un groupe transfrontalier au XXe siècle*, L'Harmattan, 2021, p.221.
[111]Idem, p.223.
[112]Dr. Gaston Rwasamanzi, *Masisi et les Banyarwanda, Histoire, Stigmates et Espérance*, Rwasamanzi publisher 2025, p.26 et p. 34
[113]Aloys Tegera Buseyi, *Les Banyarwanda du Nord-Kivu (RDC), Histoire d'un groupe transfrontalier au XX siècle*, L'Harmattan, 2021, pp.55, 62, et p.69.

king[114] of his influence. A similar process occurred in South Kivu, where Banyamulenge chiefs though not delegates of the Rwandan king were also displaced. Colonial authorities imposed their own administrative structures, and the inhabitants of these regions ceased to be considered subjects of Rwanda.

2. Colonization created problematic structures

Broadly speaking, three categories of Rwandophones emerged in colonial and postcolonial Congo:

- The "original" Banyarwanda: Rwandophones who found themselves within the Congo's borders after colonial boundaries were drawn. They had lived there before the frontier was established and remained afterward.
- The "transplanted" Banyarwanda: Rwandan subjects brought into Congo by the colonial administration as laborers for plantations and mining operations. Most were settled in North Kivu, though some were taken as far as Katanga (Kipushi and Kolwezi). This was official policy: Rwandans were extracted from their homeland and used as labor in Congo. The Rwandan king had no say, having become subordinate to colonial authority.
- The refugee Banyarwanda: Those who sought refuge in postcolonial Congo during waves of displacement in 1960–1966, 1972–1973, and 1994. After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, most returned to Rwanda in a massive repatriation, though some remained among them génocidaires opposed to the post-genocide Rwandan government, who allied themselves with Congolese authorities to continue their ideology.

All these groups' originals, transplanted, and non-returned refugees share the name Banyarwanda, literally meaning "those of Rwanda" or "inhabitants of Rwanda."

[114]DR Gaston Rwasamanzi, op. cit. p. 30

This creates confusion between Congolese populations of Rwandan cultural heritage and citizens of Rwanda proper. Populations may share culture and language while holding different nationalities. Such is the case for the Banyarwanda of Congo (first and second categories) and those of Rwanda. They share a name but not nationality. This confusion often penalizes Congolese citizens officially recognized as Banyarwanda[115]. Their detractors claim they are not true Congolese and insist they "return to their motherland" in Rwanda, despite their legitimate Congolese citizenship.

This situation is not unique: colonial borders divided many ethnic groups between Congo and neighboring Angola, Congo Brazzaville, and the Central African Republic. Thus, the partition between Rwanda and Belgian Congo was not exceptional. Why then should the Banyarwanda of North Kivu especially the Tutsi be labeled foreigners? Are the Banyamulenge of South Kivu Rwandan simply because they speak Kinyarwanda, even though they have lived in the region since the 17th–18th centuries and were never subjects of the Rwandan king? Absolutely not. Language alone does not confer citizenship. Land may do so in some countries, such as the United States, but elsewhere only law determines nationality. Today, Rwandophones in the DRC face serious nationality issues, including the Banyamulenge of South Kivu, who have never been subjects of the Rwandan kingdom.

3. With the Banyamulenge, the problem became a real threat of genocide

With the Banyamulenge, what should have been a simple issue became complicated: unlike in North Kivu, there were no "transplanted" populations here. The Banyamulenge are a Rwandophone community that has lived in this region long before

[115]It is in this sense that Jean-Claude Willame wrote a book entitled *"Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge: Ethnic Violence and the Management of Identity in Kivu"*, *Cahiers africains, Zaïre, the 1990s, Volume 6, No. 25*, L'Harmattan, 1997.

Belgian colonization indeed, well before 1885. Normally, they should not have faced any "nationality problem." Yet, through amalgamation, confusion, and deliberate bad faith, they came to be labeled "Rwandan Tutsi called Banyamulenge." In reality, they are not Rwandan at all, even though they share cultural traits.

3.1. The Banyamulenge: A fully Congolese people

The population now known as "Banyamulenge" has inhabited the regions of Fizi, Uvira, Mwenga, and the Itombwe plateau since at least the 17th–18th centuries. Abbé Alexis Kagame places them there during the reign of Yuhi Gahindiro (1746–1802). Other authors suggest earlier or later dates. In fact, these populations arrived in successive waves, settling both on the high plateaus of Minembwe and in the surrounding areas of Fizi, Uvira, and Mwenga. Their origins trace back not only to Rwanda but also to Burundi and even Tanzania. Colonial authorities gave them various names: "Tutsi of Itombwe," "Itombwe herders," "Rwanda-Burundi," "the Rwanda," "Banyarwanda," or "Rwandan immigrants." Eventually, they came to be identified as "Banyamulenge," a name they reportedly adopted in 1966–1967 to distinguish themselves from Rwandan refugees of that era[116]. They never wished to be conflated with those refugees, even though they spoke the same language.

Strictly speaking, the Banyamulenge never formed a "tribe" with customary chiefs like other groups in Kivu. They never had a mwami (king) exercising authority over them, nor representatives of the Rwandan king in their territory. No mwami Munyamulenge ever existed. Instead, they remained organized through clans and families, independent of Rwanda, though they shared its culture and physical traits. Ironically, these very elements culture and morphology now work against them, as they are mistaken for "true Rwandans" and persecuted like other Rwandophone Tutsi in the DRC. They struggle fiercely to maintain their Congolese citizenship, which is often denied.

[116]Colette Braeckman et al., op. cit.p. 35.

3.2. The traditional authority of the Banyamulenge and its dismantling

Traditionally, the Banyamulenge lived under clan chiefs, united by a common language and a pastoral culture centered on cattle. Under colonial rule, they had their own administrative entity from 1891 until its suppression in 1933. During that period, they maintained chiefdoms and sub-chiefdoms, but these were dismantled after some of their leaders resisted Belgian attempts to seize grazing lands.

From then on, their collective authority was broken apart, and their lands were handed over to leaders of neighboring Fulero and Bembe tribes, who were more compliant with colonial power. The destruction of Banyamulenge chiefdoms and similar structures in North Kivu was disastrous. Since customary chiefdoms implicitly defined Congolese citizenship, their elimination left Rwandophone Congolese without a recognized political base. In a country where tribal affiliation had become essential, anyone without a chiefdom was branded a foreigner[117].

A second problem arose after independence, during the Mulelist rebellion (1963–1966). The Banyamulenge sided with the Congolese National Army (ANC) against the rebellion, while neighboring tribes supported it. For the first time, they entered into open conflict with neighbors who had previously coexisted peacefully. Politicians from the Bembe, Fulero, and Vira communities began to stigmatize them, accusing them of fabricating the name "Banyamulenge" to conceal their supposed Rwandan identity.

Later, they were accused of supporting the Rwandan Patriotic Army (Inkotanyi). Some young Banyamulenge allegedly joined its ranks, while others contributed financially. Lists were circulated of Banyamulenge said to have returned to Rwanda after the RPF

[117]This note was graciously communicated to us by Munyampenda Jean on December 21, 2025.

victory, fueling claims of a "massive return to their so-called homeland." A member of the Vunga Commission even declared that no trace of the Banyamulenge existed in the official register of Zairian tribes[118], insisting they were "Tutsi from Rwanda who arrived in 1964."[119] In Congolese politics, even blatant falsehoods can be profitable and this narrative persists today.

3.3. The beginning of political persecution of the Banyamulenge

Banyamulenge politicians were barred from running for office, despite having had parliamentary representatives at independence. Their legitimacy was even denied to Kinyarwanda-speaking bishops such as Monsignor Gapangwa, Kanyamacumbi, and Ngabu (of the Hema tribe). By contrast, some Kivu bishops, notably Emmanuel Kataliko, openly attacked Congolese Tutsi and aligned themselves with extremist anti-tutsi movements[120]. Customary chiefs added fuel to the fire, while tribal associations launched campaigns against Tutsi communities. At least 18 armed groups now operate in eastern DRC, and civil associations have joined in, intensifying the hostility. For example, the Bucong and Lubunga associations of South Kivu repeatedly used the phrase "Rwandan Tutsi called Banyamulenge" more than thirty times in a nine-page document[121].

[118]Eulode Boissonnade, op. cit. p.345.

[119]Idem, p. 345.

[120]Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, op. cit. p.617.

[121]Manassé (Müller) Ruhimbika, *Les Banyamulenge (Congo-Zaïre) entre deux guerres*, L'Harmattan, 2001, pp. 250–258.Ruhimbika was part of the group of Banyamulenge who promoted the political movement called the *Forces Républicaines Fédéralistes*. This movement distanced itself both from Kabila and from Rwanda, which Ruhimbika accused of attempting to instrumentalize the Banyamulenge. Under the leadership of Commander Masunzu, this group fought against the RCD/Goma. See also: Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, *op. cit.*, p. 617.

This expression "Rwandan Tutsi called Banyamulenge"is constantly repeated, emphasizing that they are first Tutsi, then Rwandan, and only lastly "Banyamulenge," a name allegedly invented to disguise their "true identity." While they fight for recognition as Congolese citizens, the Kinshasa government dismisses them as Rwandans, portraying them as the spearhead of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (later renamed the Rwanda Defense Forces in 2002). They are persecuted and killed accordingly.

There is no longer any doubt: racist ideology has taken hold. Its consequences are devastating. Around 300 Rwandophones, including many Banyamulenge, were massacred in Kinshasa. Reduced to a "phantom ethnicity," they nonetheless number at least 400,000 people established in Kivu for over three centuries[122]. They have even been called the "Jews of Africa."[123]

3.4. A series of repeated massacres and other Congolese Rwandophones

The Banyamulenge have been regularly subjected to massacres, such as:

- 1996: The Bembe, in collaboration with the FAZ (Zairian Armed Forces)[124], killed hundreds of Banyamulenge civilians. In October of that year, the Vice-Governor of South Kivu, Lwasi Ngabo Lwanbaji, gave between 200,000 and 500,000 Banyamulenge one week to leave the country[125].
- 2004: More than 160 Banyamulenge refugees were massacred in Gatumba, Burundi.

[122]Euloge Boissonnade, *Kabila clone de Mobutu* ? Editions Moreux, 1998, p.237-238.
[123]Idem, op. cit. p.311.
[124]The Congolese army has borne several names: Force Publique under colonization, Armée Nationale Congolaise between 1960 and 1971, Forces Armées Zaïroises (FAZ) under Mobutu (1971 to 1997), and Forces Armées de la RDC (FARDC) since 1997.
[125]Colette Braeckman et al., op. cit.p.103.

- 2017 and 2019: Over 140 villages belonging to Congolese Tutsi and Banyamulenge were burned in South Kivu and elsewhere.

- 2020–2025: The Wazalendo militias, allied with the FDLR, FAZ, and Burundian armed forces, have attacked the Tutsi of South Kivu known as Banyamulenge. A genuine threat of genocide hangs over them.

Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and the civil society of the Itombwe Highlands have already sounded the alarm, urging the international community to intervene before it is too late. The AFC/M23 has even declared that "a genocide is underway." The situation is grave.

3.5. Current attempts at self-defense amid permanent rejection

Today, the Banyamulenge continue, as they always have, to defend their right to full Congolese citizenship. Unfortunately, they struggle in a fragmented manner. Some cling desperately to the central Congolese government, which often rejects them harshly. Repeatedly most notably in 1998, under the instigation of Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi, then Minister of Foreign Affairs the government massacred young Congolese Tutsi in Kinshasa. That same year, 120 young military recruits were shot dead in the hangars of the Kamina military base, as well as in Lubumbashi. These youths had sought to integrate into the Congolese military system, but were rejected and brutally executed. Across the country, lynchings targeted anyone whose physical appearance resembled that of a Tutsi.

Some Banyamulenge nevertheless remain loyal to a government that refuses them. A recent example is General Gasita, expelled from Uvira by Wazalendo militias despite serving the same government. This Munyamulenge general sought to defend the

interests of the Tshisekedi regime, but was rejected and driven out solely because of who he is, not what he did. This is pure racism and undeniable proof of rejection. Similarly, General Masunzu another Munyamulenge has been accused of high treason, echoing the events of 1998 when more than a hundred Banyamulenge recruits were massacred. Today, Masunzu is rehabilitated against his brothers.

Others, feeling excluded by their government, fought alongside the AFDL[126] and are now aligned with the AFC/M23. Still others sought refuge in Burundi, only to be expelled or sacrificed. The Gatumba massacre of 2004, which targeted Banyamulenge refugees, revealed the genocidal intent of Kinshasa's government: to pursue Tutsi even into foreign countries, with the aim of cleansing South Kivu and its surroundings of all Tutsi, and later purging Masisi and Goma of Rwandophone Tutsi[127]. A similar scenario unfolded in Rwanda at the Adventist University of Mudende on August 18, 1997, where about 150 Congolese Tutsi refugees from North Kivu were killed by the FDLR with support from the Zairian government. Others have sought refuge in Rwanda or elsewhere. They scatter wherever they can because the DRC denies them citizenship. Why, then, this permanent rejection?

4. The case of Rwandophones in North Kivu

With the outbreak of the Mulelist rebellion, unlike the Banyamulenge of South Kivu who sided with the Zairian Armed Forces (FARDC), all Tutsi of North and Central Kivu were accused by the central government in Kinshasa of supporting the rebellion. In 1964, an order was issued to do everything possible to neutralize these alleged allies of the Mulelist-Simba rebels.

[126]The Founding Act of the *Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo* (AFDL) (Congo-Zaire) dates from October 18, 1996, at Lemera (South Kivu). It consists of five articles, the third of which designates Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila as its spokesperson. The alliance is composed of four organizations:

[127]E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi W., *Congo-Kinshasa, La République des erreurs et la stagnation d'un Etat 1990-2015,* Leadership Editions, 2015, p.379.

What followed was extreme cruelty against the Tutsi of North Kivu, lasting from 1964 to 1965. Murders, looting, roundups, and torture were directed against the Banyarwanda[128].

A resistance movement arose in North Kivu, particularly in Masisi. It was a protest against the traditional Hunde authority over the Banyarwanda populations, mainly Tutsi, in Masisi[129]. A fierce struggle ensued between the Banyarwanda Tutsi and the Nande and Hunde tribes. Unfortunately, the Hutu Rwandophones, influenced by Kayibanda's government in Kigali and fearful of the "Inyenzi," broke away from the Tutsi of North Kivu and allied themselves with the Hunde and Nande against the Rwandophone Tutsi. This conflict became known as the "Kanyarwanda War," which lasted from 1963 to 1965[130].The Tutsi of North Kivu were accused of siding with Lumumbist rebels, as their elites were close to the Cerea Party led by Lumumbist Anicet Kashamura[131].

Supporting the Mulelist rebellion against President Mobutu was considered treason. In 1964, Prime Minister Tshombe ordered the neutralization of all allies of the Mulelist rebels. The North Kivu gendarmerie, composed mainly of Nande, Nyanga, and Hunde, seized the opportunity to massacre the Tutsi of the region, beginning with the Tutsi elite teachers, merchants, politicians, and others. Provincial authorities in North Kivu used this as a pretext to eliminate the Rwandophone Tutsi.

[128]Gaston Rwasamanzi, op. cit. p. 166.

[129]Dr. Gaston Rwasamanzi, *Masisi et les Banyarwanda, Histoire, Stigmates et Espérance, Rwasamanzi publisher, 2025, pp. 49 et 148.*

[130]There would later be a second "Kanyarwanda" in Masisi and Walikale between 1991 and 1993. The Nande, Hunde, and Nyanga militias, known as *Mai-Mai* and *Bangilima*, attacked the Hutu and Tutsi of North Kivu, resulting in numerous victims among the Banyarwanda and more than 300,000 displaced persons. This confrontation might have continued if it had not been for the massive influx of Rwandan refugees in 1994, which made the "autochthonous" populations of Kivu fear that their lands would become a vast "Hutuland" or "mini-Hutu state" (as Marie-France Cros called it), to their detriment—especially since these refugees were supported by Mobutu. See: Colette Braeckman et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 42 and 98.

[131]This note was graciously communicated to us by Munyampenda Jean on December 21, 2025.

In Central Kivu, the Mulelist rebellion also gained support from Batutsi refugees. Leaders from the UNAR Party reportedly concluded a collaboration agreement with Soumialot, head of the rebellion. Following this agreement, a certain Mudandi[132], leader of one of the so-called Rwandan Inyenzi groups, began recruiting young Tutsi refugees, particularly from the Chiminunu refugee camp in the chiefdom of Mwami Ferdinand Bisimwa Nyakalonge near Bukavu. These recruits were seen as fighting against the Kinshasa government alongside the Mulelist rebellion. As a result, Tutsi refugees in Central Kivu were persecuted, and some were massacred, including a man named Muyango[133].

The Mulelist rebellion had grave repercussions for both the Rwandophone Tutsi of North Kivu and the Banyamulenge of South Kivu. Later, during the "national identification" program, local authorities, still harboring resentment, refused to include these two groups of Tutsi from South and North Kivu. They were progressively excluded from nationality, deliberately confused either with Rwandan immigrants or with Rwandans outright even though the Banyamulenge had never been subjects of the Rwandan king nor held Rwandan nationality since settling in South Kivu centuries earlier.

5. The problem is political

The rejection of Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi by their own government is not due to their name "Banyarwanda" nor to their Rwandan cultural heritage, but primarily to a deliberate policy of exclusion. Since independence, the DRC has lacked a genuine

[132]This Mudandi was even suspected of having killed a certain Preziosi, a representative of the UNHCR in that camp, who opposed the entry of refugees into the rebellion, for which they were taken as adherents or sympathizers. His death was followed by the arrest of numerous Tutsi from Central Kivu.

[133]The latter is probably from the family of the late Déo Muyango, well known in Kigali before 1990, whose family today lives in Nyamirambo (Kigali). Both Muyangos seem to belong to the same Abega family, known as Abakagara.

inclusive policy aimed at integrating all its citizens, including those of Rwandophone culture. This exclusionary policy, targeting a specific ethnic group, has caused immense suffering and raised fears of an imminent genocide of Congolese Tutsi.

The question arises: Why does the DRC deny nationality rights to Rwandophone Tutsi who settled there long before colonization or during the colonial period? Why are some of them, identified as Tutsi, even threatened with genocide? It is not a matter of space: Congo is vast, with room for everyone. Nor is it a matter of resources: Congo is rich in minerals, yet mismanagement has left it among the poorest countries in the world. Nor is it a matter of colonial borders: across Congo's frontiers north, south, east, and west there are tribes divided by colonial boundaries who do not face nationality problems, unlike the Rwandophone Tutsi of North Kivu. For example, the Ngwandi live in both DRC and Central African Republic, the Bateke in DRC and Congo-Brazzaville, and the Bakongo in Angola and DRC. The division of peoples by colonial borders is not unique to the Rwandophone Tutsi, yet they alone are singled out and persecuted for reasons unrelated to borders.

The problem is racism, driven by an incompetent and non-inclusive political leadership steeped in violent anti-tutsi ideology. Congo suffers from a leadership poisoned by this racism. Already, Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi anticipate the worst and sometimes seek alliances with neighboring governments, while Kinshasa relies on support from countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

These Congolese Tutsi, allied with neighboring governments, have fought at least five wars to defend their rights:

1. The AFDL rebellion (September 1996 – May 1997)
2. The RCD war (August 1998 – October 2002) against Joseph Désiré Kabila
3. The CNDP war (July 2006 – March 2009)
4. The first M23 war (April 2012 – 2014)
5. The second AFC/M23 war (2023 – present)

As will be discussed further, none of these wars resolved the issue. The struggle remains the same: Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi demanding their denied rights.
Their survival hangs by a fragile thread, with an uncertain outcome depending on the balance of power. For them, the most threatened right was long the right to Congolese nationality. But over time, the right to life itself has become the most urgent, as Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi now face the danger of extermination.

6. The victimization of Rwandophones through laws denying them nationality

There has been great confusion in the granting of Congolese nationality to Rwandophone Congolese in general, and to those originating from Rwanda-Burundi in particular. From the colonial period to the present day, nearly a dozen legal texts have governed Congolese nationality, some of which outright denied nationality to Rwandophone Congolese. Aloys Tegera Buseyi[134] recalls the most important of these texts:

- The decree of December 27, 1892 excluded no one. One was Congolese by birth on Congolese soil, by naturalization, by presumption of law, or by choice. Even a child born to a foreigner on Congolese soil could quickly acquire Congolese status.
- The law of March 23, 1960, passed by the Belgian Parliament just before independence, granted voting rights only to Congolese citizens, and to Ruanda-Urundi nationals residing in Congo for at least ten years. Transplanted populations of the 1950s–1960s were therefore excluded.
- The Fundamental Law of May 19, 1960 maintained all colonial provisions, with their previously noted shortcomings.
- The Constitution of August 1, 1964 introduced the principle of a Congolese nationality "one and exclusive," granted only to

[134]Aloys Tegera Buseyi, *Les Banyarwanda du Nord Kivu (RDC), Histoire d'un groupe transfrontalier au XXe siècle*, L'Harmattan, 2021, pp.331-351.

persons whose ancestors belonged to tribes established in Congo before October 18, 1908. This Constitution remained silent on Ruanda-Urundi nationals whose children born in Congo were automatically Congolese under the 1892 decree. This loophole led to exclusions: during the distribution of identity cards, Rwandan residents in Masisi were denied Congolese citizenship.

- Ordinance-Law No. 71-020 of March 26, 1971 recognized that "persons originating from Ruanda-Urundi established in Congo as of June 30, 1960 are deemed to have Congolese nationality as of that date." Yet again, those transplanted in the 1950s–1960s were excluded, stripped of citizenship, and reduced to second-class citizens or stateless persons.
- Law No. 81-002 of June 29, 1981, based on jus sanguinis, overturned all previous gains for Ruanda-Urundi nationals. It stipulated that Congolese nationality by origin applied only to members of tribes established in Congo within its borders as of August 1, 1885. This destabilized even prominent figures such as Rwakabuba Shinga, a member of the MPR Central Committee. The law rejected collective acquisition of Congolese nationality for Rwandan and Burundian nationals, declaring previously issued identity cards null and void.

When the Zairian government regulated nationality in 1981, the Banyamulenge considered "foreigners" were excluded outright, denied Congolese nationality, and effectively erased from collective memory and identity. This amounted to denying them the right to exist.

- In April 1991, the provincial parliament of Kivu went so far as to vote for the exclusion from Zairian territory of all Rwandophone speakers, including those who had lived there for centuries, such as the Banyamulenge. They were not counted among the "autochthonous" peoples and were classified only as "Rwandan immigrants." Both Banyamulenge and Banyarwanda of North Kivu rejected this categorization, refusing to be treated as immigrants or Rwandans. They rejected the amalgamation between Congolese Rwandophones and Rwandan or Burundian

refugees and immigrants who had arrived since the 1960s.

- The Constitution of April 4, 2003 reinstated the principle of a Congolese nationality "one and exclusive."
- The National Assembly on September 22, 2004 noted that Rwandan nationality cannot be lost, a precedent that could allow Banyarwanda immigrants to acquire dual nationality something Congolese law does not permit.
- The Constitution of February 18, 2006 recognized the right to Congolese nationality only for Rwandan immigrants residing in Congo before June 30, 1960.

These constant changes in nationality laws have never provided assurance to Rwandophone Congolese. Their situation has remained precarious at both national and provincial levels. A governor here or there can harass them without recourse to law or protection from Kinshasa. On the contrary, the central government does not punish citizens who persecute Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge, still perceived as foreign immigrants. This permanent impunity, passed down from generation to generation, remains a source of insecurity. Rwandophone Congolese, especially Tutsi, are victims in their own country, the DRC. The law does not protect them; instead, it exposes them to the whims of anti-tutsi extremists.

7. Impunity and its intergenerational transmission regarding the massacre of Tutsi

It was after Congo's independence in 1960 that the first clashes emerged between the elites of the North Kivu tribes and those of the Rwandophone communities in the same region. Those among the latter who managed to rise to political positions or succeed in business cast a shadow over their "autochthonous" colleagues, who labeled them as foreign "allogènes." Jealousies from non-Rwandophone tribes were not lacking. Moreover, successive waves of Tutsi refugees arriving from Rwanda between 1960 and

1973 increased the number of Tutsi in the region and worsened the situation.

7.1. Tribal political struggles

The arrival of new waves of refugees created a problem of access to land in this part of the DRC, as so-called "autochthonous" populations feared losing their lands. The situation worsened when the CEREA party (Centre de Regroupement Africain), moderate and pro-Lumumbist but perceived as pro-Tutsi, won the provincial elections of 1960[135]. Two Tutsi ministers entered the provincial government: Jean Népomuscène Rwiyereka of Masisi and Cyprien Rwakabuba of Rutshuru. Mwami René Ndeze, a Hutu and anti-tutsi leader who succeeded his father Daniel Ndeze, opposed their rise. He appointed two Hutu ministers of his own: Edouard Mujinya and Marcel Bahizi[136]. Thus began a fierce rivalry between the elites of these two communities, which quickly escalated. The rejection of Congolese Tutsi only worsened, and this issue has resurfaced regularly ever since.

From this period onward, tribal mutual-aid associations emerged, evolving into self-defense groups both among Congolese Rwandophones and among so-called "authentic" Zairians. Tribes relied on these associations without any broader political program beyond tribalism[137]. Militias of this kind were born and thrived. Civil organizations became tribalized as well. Rwandophones did the same, but unfortunately divided further into Hutu and Tutsi:

[135]CEREA was first an ethnic mutual aid association founded in 1958; it became a political party in 1959 under the presidency of Kashamura Anicet Bisukiro. It was close to Lumumba's MNLC party, just as UNAR was in Rwanda.

[136]Dr Gaston Rwasamanzi, op. cit. p.150.

[137]For example, there was the *Kayanda* mutual aid association among the Nande, the *Bushenge* mutual aid association among the Hunde, *Magrivi* among the Hutu, *Umoja* among the Tutsi and Hutu, *Acuba* among the Hunde-Nyanga-Tembo, etc. See: Colette Braeckman et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 41–42.

Hutu joined Magrivi (Mutuelle d'agriculteurs du Kivu), while Tutsi joined Acogenoki (Association coopérative des groupements d'éleveurs du Kivu).

Public life became increasingly tribalized. Violent clashes erupted in Masisi and elsewhere. Magrivi (today Agasenge) allied with the Hunde, and confrontation escalated in 1993. Tutsi cattle were exterminated: more than 400,000 cows were taken from Tutsi herders in Kivu[138]. Resorting to a tribal-based customary system in the 20th century, in a country claiming to be democratic, was a profound political regression. It prevented merit from emerging, as tribal affiliation took precedence. The obsession with autochthony only worsened the situation, with autochthony proclaimed as the supreme principle.

7.2. The active role of Hutu genocidaires from Rwanda

In 1994, extremist Hutu refugees from Rwanda brought with them into the DRC the virus of genocidal anti-tutsi ideology, which quickly contaminated the country. Here, the narrative was framed as "autochthonous Bantus" against supposedly "Nilotic" Tutsi tribes another false ideology imported by colonizers. Belgian colonial authorities had taught and spread this idea among the common people, and it was widely believed. Today, it remains entrenched in the DRC. It was from this ideology that Kinshasa's central government supported President Habyarimana in 1990 at the start of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's liberation war, and later aided extremist Rwandan militias who fled to the DRC in July 1994 after committing genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. These militias were eventually integrated into the structures of Congo's defense forces. They also entered mining operations, using profits to purchase weapons to fight the Rwandan government. They built strong friendships and business networks both within Congo and internationally.

[138]Euloge Boissonnade, *Kabila Clone de Mobutu ?* Editions Moreux, 1998, p.342.

Bishop J.M. Runiga Lugerero revealed: "The Hutu rebels of the FDLR, who sow chaos in eastern DRC, have managed to build an international network that allows them to export minerals in exchange for financing. These rebels, he continued, received support from members of charitable organizations and, through intermediaries, exported minerals. The group of experts cited British, Malaysian, and Thai companies buying stones from mines controlled by these rebels."[139]

Today, they remain active, operating under the cover of the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC). They collaborate with Wazalendo militias (pro-government groups created and financed by the Tshisekedi regime) and even with CNDD-FDD and FLN forces from Burundi. They are everywhere sometimes as government soldiers or mercenaries, sometimes as hired killers or miners. They spread genocidal ideology within the Congolese army and militias, contaminating ordinary populations in both the DRC and Burundi.

The FDLR, for their part, aim to retake power in Rwanda. No government in the world has condemned their integration into the Congolese army. This poses a real threat to Rwanda and to Rwandophone Tutsi, over whom these negative forces constantly cast the shadow of a "genocide conspiracy."[140] The Pretoria Agreement and multiple UN resolutions promised to disarm them, but this never materialized. Will Washington succeed where others failed? Time will tell. Rwanda, for its part, will do everything possible to secure its border with the DRC always preferring offense to defense.

[139]E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi W., op. cit. p.10-11.

[140]E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi W., *Congo-Kinshasa, La République des erreurs et la stagnation d'un Etat 1990-2015,* Leadership Editions, 2015, p.380

7.3. The Banyamulenge denied the right to life

Meanwhile, the Banyamulenge and Banyarwanda of North Kivu have been erased from ethnographic maps of the DRC, even though maps readily show the locations of other Kivu tribes except the Rwandophones. Their ethnographic existence is denied, despite being documented in certain works, such as Dr. Gaston Rwasamanzi's Masisi et les Banyarwanda, Histoire, stigmates et espérance (2025), p. 43.

Detractors instead cite the work of M. Flament (1906), which made no reference to Rwandophone "tribes," dismissing them as phantom peoples supposedly nonexistent in eastern Congo. They also rely on maps of Congo produced by Van de Houde and Van de Kerken in 1964, which did not mention the Banyamulenge. The Mwami of Uvira reportedly declared he found no trace of such a people[141]. Yet, these Congolese Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge exist in flesh and blood on Congolese soil, regardless of efforts to ignore or erase them. They even appear on certain ethnographic maps. To deny their existence and erase them from ethnographic records is, in any case, a very ominous sign.

8. When Kabila renounced the alliance and refused to resolve the Rwandophone question

Let us recall that the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) took up arms against Mobutu in October 1996. This rebellion fought alongside the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), which sought to push back as far as possible the ex-FAR (Rwandan Armed Forces) and the Interahamwe militias that swarmed in Zaire's towns and forests. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was then the spokesperson of this rebellion, which enjoyed full support from Kigali and Kampala. Cities fell under his control rapidly: Uvira on October 19, 1996, followed by Bukavu, Goma, Beni, Bunia, Kalemie, Kindu, Ting-Ting, Kipushi, Kananga, Kolwezi,

[141]Euloge Boissonade, op. cit. p.238.

Kikwit, Kenge, and finally Kinshasa on May 17, 1997.

Once the AFDL war was won, its spokesperson Laurent-Désiré Kabila proclaimed himself President of the Republic of Congo, replacing Mobutu. But he was not popular in Kinshasa, nor were the soldiers of the Alliance. Rumors spread that these forces intended to detach Kivu from the rest of Congo and hand it over to the Banyamulenge and Congolese Tutsi of Rwandan origin settled in Kivu. Kabila was thus branded a traitor. He was accused of surrounding himself with Rwandan soldiers, considered mercenaries, and of being their prisoner. Pressure mounted for him to free himself from his patrons, and he threw himself into this mission wholeheartedly.

Faced with growing opposition, Kabila played a dangerous game of "double or nothing." He invoked a "duty of ingratitude" toward Rwanda, claiming that circumstances demanded it. He declared that he was no longer a rebel leader but a Congolese head of state, and decided to rid himself of the AFDL and the Rwandan soldiers who had lifted him from exile and placed him at the head of the Alliance. On July 27, 1998, he issued a communiqué announcing the end of Rwandan military presence in Congo. He congratulated the Congolese people for having "tolerated" their presence[142]. The repatriation of Rwandan soldiers began two days later, on July 29, 1998.

Congolese Rwandophones and Banyamulenge felt abandoned, as no definitive solution to their plight was offered. The Rwandan soldiers themselves felt betrayed. They had fought Mobutu, who was complicit with Rwanda's genocidal government and had transplanted genocidal militias into Congo, yet they returned home without any resolution of the problem. For them, the mission was incomplete. Security along Rwanda's border with the DRC remained precarious, dependent on the goodwill of genocidaires entrenched and integrated into Congo's politico-military institutions. Indeed, ex-FAR soldiers and Interahamwe militias were given Congolese

[142]Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, *Nouvelle histoire du Congo, Des origines à la République démocratique*, Edition Le Cri-Buku, 2012, pp.610- 612.

army uniforms and reintegrated into brigades. Some regrouped under PALIR (Armed People for the Liberation of Rwanda), with its armed wing ALIR (Army for the Liberation of Rwanda), later renamed FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) in 1996.

The Tutsi of the DRC remained under threat of genocide. Everyone sensed it. At the 20th France-Africa Summit in January 1999, Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu urged Laurent-Désiré Kabila to "put an end to calls for hatred, violence, and genocide against the Tutsi."[143] His plea went unheard. Instead, Kabila desperately sought condemnation of Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi countries he accused of aggression against Congo but he failed. Nothing was resolved. The struggle had to continue. New rebellions erupted in Goma and Bukavu, giving rise to an anti-Kabila front led by the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD).

9. The war of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD)

The RCD was created on August 12, 1998, under the leadership of Wamba dia Wamba, launching the second war in Kivu. Its executive committee included Banyamulenge leaders such as Karaha Bizima, who had been part of the AFDL structures. In November 1999, the rebellion was joined by the MLC (Movement for the Liberation of Congo), founded in Kisangani by Jean-Pierre Bemba, son of a former minister. Rwanda, with its RPA forces, allied with the RCD rebels to secure its borders against genocidal militias and recalcitrant ex-FAR soldiers.

The coalition of the RPA and the RCD-MLC managed to conquer 40% of Congolese territory. Cities such as Uvira, Goma, Kindu, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, and Kananga fell under their control. Only Kinshasa remained to be taken.

[143] *Jeune -Afrique Economie n°* 277, déc. 1989- janvier 1999.

9.1. Failed attempt to capture Kinshasa

On August 4, 1998, an audacious operation was launched to capture Kinshasa from the rear. RPA and RCD soldiers were airlifted from Goma to Kitona in Bas-Congo.

The operation succeeded initially and lasted until August 16, 1998. These forces liberated Boma, Moanda, Matadi, and even the Inga dam.

But Kabila received reinforcements not only from his own troops but also from Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. These allies managed to halt the attackers. The RCD and their Rwandan allies were forced to retreat. Government forces and their allies retook Moanda, Kitona, Banana, and Matadi by July 30. Kabila was saved, but he would later be assassinated by his bodyguard on January 16, 2001.

Joseph Kabila, who succeeded his father, launched negotiations beginning with the Inter-Congolese Dialogue at Sun City (February 25 – April 12, 2002), which resulted in a power-sharing agreement between Kabila, the RCD, and the MLC. This was followed by the Pretoria Accord of December 16, 2002, known as the "Global and Inclusive Agreement" of transition. All parties pledged to form a single, integrated, and restructured national army.

9.2. Peace accords without a future

Between Rwanda and Kabila, there was also the Pretoria Peace Accord signed on July 30, 2002. The Rwandan government agreed to withdraw its estimated 20,000 troops from Congo. In return, Kabila pledged to dismantle extremist FDLR militias, arrest genocidaires, demobilize Hutu militias, and repatriate them from the Kamina base. Rwanda fulfilled its commitments, withdrawing its troops as confirmed by MONUC[144]. But Kabila failed to honor his promises until his departure. Instead, divisions and clashes

[144]E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi W., *Congo- Kinshasa. La répétition des erreurs et la stagnation d'un Etat 1990-2015*, Leadership Editions, 2015, p.307.

erupted between his army, joined by the MLC, and RCD-Goma forces, despite the "inclusive and integrated" agreement[145].

The "problem" of Rwandophones Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge remained unresolved. Some RCD officers refused to join the new integrated FARDC (Congolese Armed Forces). They did not travel to Kinshasa to assume their posts. Among them was General Laurent Nkundabatware, known as Nkunda Miheto. He and several comrades stayed in Goma. They were replaced by decree, and the High Command decided to prosecute them in military court. Nkunda went on to lead the Bukavu insurgency against FARDC in May 2004[146], which claimed many Banyamulenge victims.

[145]The RCD would break up into RCD-Kisangani, RCD-Goma, and RCD-KML. Later, there would be other smaller subdivisions such as RCD-Original, RCD-Authentique, and RCD-Congo.

[146]Nkunda, born on February 6, 1967, descended from a family that had migrated from Burundi and settled in Jomba, North Kivu, since the 17th century. His paternal great-grandfather in this region was a certain Nshizirungu, who was the dean of local customary chiefs mandated by the king of Rwanda at Jomba. His father, Rusesamigabo, who was not on good terms with Mwami Daniel Ndeze, had to migrate to Bwito.
He grew up in the Adventist faith of his mother, Nyirabuyanja. He even considered becoming a pastor but was refused. Nevertheless, he remained deeply marked by a taste for evangelization. He studied secondary school at the Kitwé Institute, which he completed in 1985. He studied psychology for one year at the University of Kisangani, which he left for the Adventist University of Gisenyi, where anti-tutsi unrest prevented him from continuing his studies.
He then joined the RPF (*Front Patriotique Rwandais*) Inkotanyi (1991–1992), where he was a cadre from 1991 to 1992, and later became a soldier in 1993 in the APR (*Armée Patriotique Rwandaise*), serving in special intelligence services. The war and genocide in Rwanda ended when Nkunda held the rank of sergeant.
The unrest in North Kivu (1991–1995) claimed the lives of 51 members of his family. His first wife, Sophia, died of illness in April 1999, and he remarried in 2000 to a woman from the Bashi family. From October 1996, Sergeant Nkunda joined the First Congo War on the side of the AFDL. He became a lieutenant in 1998, then a colonel in the Congolese army in 2001, and a general in 2003.
See: Steward Andrew Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 47–149.

On June 2, 2004, Bukavu fell under insurgent control. Negotiations followed, and Nkunda's troops agreed to withdraw to Kalehe on condition of an investigation into Banyamulenge massacres and a general amnesty for his forces.

The toll was 102 dead and 106 wounded[147]. Nkunda and his men moved to Minova, where, joined by the group "Synergy for the Defense of Peace and Concord," they formed the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP). He strengthened its military wing, the "Congolese National Army (ANC)," with General Bosco Ntaganda as Chief of Staff and Colonel Nziramakenga Sultan, known as Makenga Sultan, as deputy.

The Bukavu revolt demonstrated that the various accords had achieved nothing. The formation of a national army failed. Decentralization as a mode of governance also failed. Massacres of innocents continued with impunity. The nationality issue of the Banyamulenge and all Rwandophones of eastern Congo remained unresolved. Worse still, another massacre occurred: Banyamulenge refugees in Burundi near Uvira, at the Gatumba camp, were slaughtered on August 13–14, 2004. More than 170 were killed by Burundian militias of Agathon Rwasa, with the complicity of Congolese Mai-Mai and Rwandan FDLR. Hate media continued to inflame the situation. The issue of the FDLR and Interahamwe militias remained unresolved. As Stewart A. Scott aptly put it: "The FDLR came... to stay." Increasingly, irrefutable evidence of genocidal conspiracy and attempts to infiltrate Rwanda by the FDLR came to light[148].

9.3. Total division among Congolese Rwandophones

Unfortunately, Rwandophones of North Kivu divided among themselves once again Hutu on one side, Tutsi on the other. This was the second time such a division occurred. The vicissitudes of time had taken their toll. The legislative and provincial elections

[147]E. Tammy Tambwe Ushindi, W. op. cit. p. 272

[148]Stewart Andrew Scott, op. cit. p.275.

of 2006 were conducted along ethnic lines, and Tutsi candidates were marginalized, especially since many Rwandophone Tutsi refugees living in Rwanda (Byumba, Kibuye, Ngarama, Nkamira, Cyangugu), in Gatumba (Burundi), and Nyakivara (Uganda) had not returned to participate. In South Kivu as well, RCD candidates lost the elections.

General Nkunda and the Congolese government attempted reconciliation by trying to integrate his men into the army through an operation called mixage. Both the National Assembly and the Kivu provincial assembly denounced the plan, and it failed just as the disarmament of the FDLR had failed[149]. On August 18, 2007, General Mayala even ordered the suspension of operations against the FDLR[150], shielding these unrepentant genocidaires under his authority. They realized that impunity protected them, emboldening them and rendering them untouchable despite their crimes.

9.4. Fleeting diplomatic glimmers: birth of the M23

Not all was lost. After the rupture of diplomatic relations in August 1998, President Paul Kagame and Joseph Kabila renewed ties and met on August 6, 2009, in the "neutral zone" between Gisenyi and Goma. At the end of their talks, both heads of state pledged to guarantee their countries' security and eradicate armed groups. They even revived the idea of jointly exploiting methane gas from Lake Kivu.

In January 2009, there was a joint FARDC-RDF operation called Amani Leo against the FDLR. At that time, Nkunda himself was arrested and replaced at the head of the CNDP by General Ntaganda. Negotiations followed, leading to the March 23, 2009 peace agreement. The CNDP agreed to become a political party and was promised participation in governance. Its imprisoned members were to be released, and its refugees repatriated.

[149]Idem, p. 380.
[150]Ibidem, p.407.

Unfortunately, CNDP members split into pro-Nkunda and pro-Ntaganda factions. Deadly score-settling soon erupted.

Nationally, the March 23 Agreement was not respected, and the CNDP denounced it. Ntaganda himself was pursued by the ICC and fled, followed by other soldiers. In short, the CNDP was not integrated politically or militarily. Its soldiers decided to go on the offensive, creating the "March 23 Movement," more simply called M23, born on May 6, 2012. Its military branch was entrusted to Nziramakenga Emmanuel Sultan, better known as Makenga Sultan, a brigadier general and chief of staff.

The Kinshasa government issued an ultimatum, but in vain. On November 20, 2012, M23 captured Goma and other localities. The UN Security Council intervened and condemned M23. The European Union did the same, and the ICC reopened Ntaganda's case. M23 was condemned by everyone, including Rwanda and Uganda. It was forced to withdraw from Goma. Its leaders settled in Bunagana but remained divided between pro-Nkunda and pro-Makenga factions, weakening their strength. At one point, Makenga even deposed the movement's president, Bishop Jean-Marie Runiga Lugerero[151].

9.5. The resurrection of M23

Later, M23 rose from its ashes in 2021 and resumed war in 2023. This time, it fought more united than before. By early 2025, it had already seized control of several strategic localities in North Kivu. Goma fell under its control on January 26, 2025, Bukavu on February 16, 2025, and Uvira on December 9, 2025 though on December 15, 2025, M23, allied with the AFC (Congo River Alliance), decided to withdraw unilaterally from Uvira. The

[151]Bishop Runiga Lugerero, president of M23, wrote a critical preface about the institutions of the DRC in the book by E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi W., *Congo-Kinshasa. The Repetition of Errors and the Stagnation of a State, 1990–2015*, Leadership Editions, March 2015.

implications and consequences of this withdrawal remain unclear. Meanwhile, the AFC/M23 demands special status for the liberated zones, though South Kivu, home of the Banyamulenge, is not yet fully under its control. Facing this new M23 war, Kinshasa mobilized multiple forces: FARDC, mercenaries, the Burundian army, MONUSCO, SADC, tribal militias and armed groups including the FDLR. This is a troubling sign.

The government of Burundian President Ndayishimiye also lent support to Tshisekedi, greatly complicating the situation with its soldiers and militias. The Banyamulenge are encircled and in danger of extermination. As of this writing, those in the plateaus of Minembwe and Mikenke are surrounded by genocidal Wazalendo militias assisted by Burundian armed forces. Voices such as Moise Nyarugabo have begun denouncing these actions by Burundian authorities and their army. The world must urgently intervene to prevent genocide against the Banyamulenge, who are gravely threatened. Otherwise, it will be too late.

10. Genocide is never an accident, it is prepared

Let us recall here the speech of President Tshisekedi at the United Nations on September 24, 2025, in which he referred to "a silent genocide" taking place in his country. Add to this the communiqué of the AFC dated September 19, 2025, which spoke of "ethnic cleansing and the spread of ethnic discourse in Uvira." Now let us ask: who has planned this genocide that is being spoken of on both sides?

A genocide is never an accident. It is always a premeditated and planned act, prepared by those in power. It targets a specific group (ethnic, national, racial, or religious) protected under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of December 9, 1948. It occurs in a preconditioned context. There are facilitators, catalysts, and triggers. There are even factors that can limit or stop it altogether. The genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda revealed its different phases and aspects. We will

use that experience to analyze the situation in the DRC regarding the imminent genocide in this country.

The first question is this: among the 450 tribes living in the DRC, which is currently most at risk of genocide? Our hypothesis is that it is the Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi, including the Banyamulenge, who today are most exposed to imminent genocide in the DRC. This is not a fatality, but certain facts demonstrate it sufficiently. It is therefore not the Nande, Hunde, Havu, Shi, Fulero, Bembe, Lega, Banyindu, or other tribes who are threatened though war may subject them to war crimes here and there. That would of course be tragic, but it is different from the crime of genocide.

One thing is certain: the AFC/M23 does not seek to exterminate any of these Kivu tribes. Only the Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi are at risk of extermination by the current government of the DRC, in collaboration with the Burundian government and their respective militias. The preconditions are already in place, and nearly all the factors are assembled for genocide to occur. Fortunately, there is also a limiting factor: the AFC/M23.

There are also unknown scenarios at present. For example: what would happen if Tshisekedi left power, voluntarily or by force, perhaps through an internal military coup? What if the next Congolese elections brought to power a new president capable of better managing the future of the DRC in general and the eastern provinces in particular? What if the current Burundian president ceased, voluntarily or by force, to support Kinshasa's genocidal project? What if the newly elected president of Tanzania exerted pressure to prevent the extermination of the Banyamulenge? And if Rwanda did the same? What if the agreements signed on December 4, 2025, in Washington between President Paul Kagame and President Tshisekedi but without the AFC/M23 produced the desired positive effects? What if the West intervened, or if U.S. pressure tilted one way or the other?

All these questions remain unanswered, while Tshisekedi and his allies do not seem to have abandoned their project of exterminating the Banyamulenge and all Rwandophone Tutsi of

North Kivu. The preconditions are in place, and certain factors leading to genocide are already assembled. Only the eventual victory of the AFC/M23 seems capable of stopping it definitively.

11. On the preconditions of genocide

What we call the preconditions of genocide are not its causes. They merely create situations that favor other factors more directly oriented toward the intended objective. We will cite at least four of them.

11.1. Theambiguous or falsequalification of "Banyarwanda"

The practice of calling the Tutsi of the DRC (and even the Hutu living there) "Ba-nya-Rwanda" (Ba: people, nya: belonging), meaning "people belonging to Rwanda," is a prerequisite for all possible ambiguities. In the DRC, this name designates those who speak the Kinyarwanda language.Kinyarwanda is indeed one of the local languages of the DRC, as described for example by Isidore Nduywel è Nziem in his 2012[152] book. Currently, in four of the seven territories of North Kivu, Kinyarwanda is spoken. The "Banyarwanda tribe" has long appeared in works on the DRC for example, in Kabila prend le pouvoir (1988)[153], edited by Colette Braeckman, and in Stewart Andrew Scott's Laurent Nkunda et la rébellion du Kivu, Au cœur de la guerre congolaise (Karthala, 2008), p. 20. But the name "Banyarwanda" also designates the inhabitants of Rwanda, who speak the same language, Rwanda's national tongue. Let us not forget that Kinyarwanda is also spoken

[152]Bishop Runiga Lugerero, president of M23, wrote a critical preface about the institutions of the DRC in the book by E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi W., *Congo-Kinshasa. The Repetition of Errors and the Stagnation of a State, 1990–2015*, Leadership Editions, March 2015.

[153]Colette Braeckman et al., *Kabila prend le pouvoir*, Les prémices d'une chute, La campagne victorieuse de l'AFDL, Le Congo aujourd'hui, Editions Complexes, GRIP, 1988, p. 36.

in Bufumbira, Uganda, without its speakers being labeled Rwandan nationals.

This appellation "Banyarwanda" is therefore a source of confusion between inhabitants of Rwanda and those who speak Kinyarwanda as their mother tongue. In the DRC, where language often designates tribal origin, this confusion leads to considering both the Tutsi of North Kivu and the Banyamulenge as belonging to the "Rwandan tribe." This is dangerous, because anti-tutsi extremists can take this literally and treat them as "foreigners" or enemies to be eliminated—especially if the local government, instead of protecting them, gives the green light to such a project. And there are already worrying signs in this direction.

11.2. The alleged Tutsi morphology and culture

In reality, the Tutsi do not have a culture unique to themselves, and the supposed morphology attributed to them by colonization is entirely arbitrary. It changes with intermarriage and social conditions.

Nevertheless, the fact that Banyamulenge and Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi share this so-called morphology and a culture similar to that of Rwanda's Tutsi is undeniable. This could facilitate the targeting of individuals possessing these two supposed traits if other conditions were met.

If adherents of FDLR ideology, integrated into Kinshasa's power structures, gained sufficient strength and alliances, they could easily identify who is Tutsi and who is not. The genocide against Rwandophone Tutsi in the DRC could then be swiftly executed. The hunt for individuals with these "two criteria" would be facilitated if other conditions were in place. This would be all the easier since such hunts based on "Tutsi morphology" have already occurred in Kinshasa, claiming many victims.

11.3. The unresolved question of the "transplanted"

The third precondition already in place is the ambiguity surrounding the "transplanted" Rwandans, among whom were also some Tutsi. Their detractors claim they never lost the nationality of their country of origin. Indeed, Rwandan nationality can only be lost through official renunciation, which was never done by those concerned, who were then subjects of the King of Belgium. At that time, there was no law on Rwandan nationality. Rwanda had no power to protect its nationals transplanted, willingly or forcibly, to the Belgian Congo. The ambiguity of the status of these former transplanted populations would disadvantage them if ever they were formally recognized, and if other conditions were met for them to be targeted.

11.4. Refugees without legal status

The fourth factor concerns the refugees from 1959–1994 who did not return to Rwanda and whose refugee status is not currently recognized either by the DRC or by the international community. They are protected by no law. This creates a fragile situation for the Tutsi among them, since they have no recognized status to defend them in the event of anti-tutsi extremism even if the most resourceful among them claim Congolese citizenship and possess identity documents. Their resourcefulness cannot protect them if all Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi were to be targeted for extermination.

Thus, as already noted, these preconditions are not in themselves the cause of genocide, but they favor it when other conditions are met. This is all the more likely in a world of constant competition political, administrative, economic, and land-related. In such competitions, people whose status contains weaknesses are easily marginalized, as all weapons are used to eliminate competitors with fragile positions. Competition, rarely fair, excludes the weakest when necessary: it only takes the right conditions for this

to happen. The label "Banyarwanda," the supposed offense of Tutsi morphology, the ambiguity of the status of transplanted Tutsi, and the unresolved situation of Rwandan refugees who did not return are not causes of genocide in themselves, but they can weaken Congolese Tutsi and make them vulnerable when the time comes.

12. Factors that could facilitate the genocide of Rwandophone Tutsi in the DRC

We now present six factors already established in the DRC that could facilitate the execution of genocide against Congolese Tutsi.

12.1. Rendering Congolese Tutsi second-class citizens

The fact that Rwandophone Tutsi of the DRC have already been reduced to second-class citizens by questioning their Congolese identity is a step toward denying their fundamental rights. Every genocidal process begins by stripping the future victims of their rights. Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi are currently in this situation. This is a dangerous sign, for it is the first step toward genocide: denying all rights to the targeted victims. This factor, which could facilitate genocide against Congolese Tutsi, is firmly established today in the DRC.

12.2. Institutionalization of impunity

The institutionalization of impunity for those who have committed grave abuses against the Tutsi of the DRC is an encouraging sign for perpetrators. The guarantee of impunity always facilitates the execution of genocide. Its planners, organizers, and executors never imagine they can be prosecuted. They never feel bound by the law. This is the current situation for promoters of genocidal ideas in eastern DRC. They are emboldened by presumed impunity. This is another factor that could facilitate genocide against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi, and it is firmly entrenched today in this unfortunate country.

12.3. Institutionalization of genocidal ideology in the DRC

The institutionalization of propaganda carrying genocidal anti-tutsi ideology on a wide scale is another factor encouraging the commission of genocide in the DRC. Hate propaganda directed against a specific group is always a prerequisite for genocide against that group. Such propaganda against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi exists today. It weakens those against whom it is directed. It is both a tool and a necessary pathway toward genocide. It is currently underway in the DRC and this is grave.

12.4. Creation, training, and arming of militias

The existence of numerous militias in the DRC and Burundi directed against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi is another major factor that could facilitate their extermination. Here, too, there is deliberate confusion between armed militias such as Wazalendo and politico-military organizations like the AFC/M23. It would be erroneous to classify the latter as an armed militia.

The AFC/M23 is not a militia. Its leaders, such as Corneille Nangaa, and its senior officers have detached themselves from official institutions they long served. Nangaa, founder of the AFC, is not a newcomer: he presided over the Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) from 2015 to 2021 and held other high positions before that. Several senior M23 officers served in the Congolese National Army before breaking away. They are in opposition. They have a clear political vision: to "refound the Congolese state." They are not a ragtag group thrown into militias. It is absurd to confuse them with such groups.

The existence of armed militias, however, is always a danger for a targeted group—as is currently the case for Congolese Tutsi. These militias would be the first executors of genocide when the time comes. They constitute a grave factor, ready to carry out genocide against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi if the signal were given.

12.5. The complicity of MONUSCO, incapable of stopping genocidal massacres

The notorious inefficiency of MONUSCO troops in the DRC and the silence of the international community for nearly 26 years are signs that genocide could unfold easily without intervention from either MONUSCO or the broader international community. The current silence of MONUSCO in the face of the threat of genocide against Congolese Tutsi is itself revealing of potential complicity, and it is criminal. Its tendency to side with the Kinshasa government and its armed forces is one of the factors likely to favor the genocidal process underway against Congolese Tutsi in eastern DRC.

It is impossible to denounce all the visible factors leading to genocide against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi, but it is not difficult to foresee that MONUSCO and its leaders could be considered complicit with the genocidal government of the DRC if genocide were to occur. This is not an accusation of intent, but rather the logical conclusion drawn from observed facts up to now. MONUSCO is not credible in this regard and never will be. Twenty-six years of its presence in the DRC have produced a largely negative record. Everything is therefore possible, including genocide against Congolese Tutsi despite MONUSCO's presence. Several villages have already been destroyed without its intervention. Genocide is even possible with its silent or indirectly active complicity. Failure to intervene is itself an act moving in that direction. Its non-assistance to people in danger, its lack of intervention, and its current guilty silence are all factors that could facilitate genocide against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi.

12.6. A genocide underway

The idea that genocide could occur and is even being tested in the DRC is widespread and sufficiently documented. President

Tshisekedi himself acknowledged it, though he sowed confusion by speaking of a "silent genocide" without specifying the targeted group. Genocide is never silent in wartime. It is always clear which group is targeted.

The Congolese government should state clearly against whom this genocide is being carried out. Is it against the Congolese people in general, or against all the tribes of Kivu Province in particular? The reality is that it is directed against Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi and Banyamulenge. It is undeniably a case of "ethnic cleansing" that must be stopped before it is too late.

The confusion maintained by the Congolese government about the genocide underway in the DRC seeks to conceal the ethnic group targeted, diluting it within the broader Congolese population. This is a well-known strategy called the "double genocide," which attempts to portray everyone as both victim and perpetrator. In reality, only Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi are in the crosshairs, and they are the sole victims currently being targeted.

This political maneuver by the Tshisekedi regime is also manifested in the creation of a new concept called "Genost," which has no political, sociological, or legal meaning. Let us recall that genocide always targets a specific group—national, ethnic, racial, or religious. In this case, the genocide unfolding on Congolese territory is aimed solely at the Tutsi group and its Banyamulenge affiliates.

13. Only the AFC/M23 could currently stop the genocidal process in the DRC

It is not possible to rely on MONUSCO to stop the genocidal process currently underway in eastern DRC. It has neither neutralized armed groups, nor disarmed genocidaires, nor protected civilians. The "machine" that is the UN, patron of MONUSCO, pays so-called experts who seek to whitewash it, even though it is both judge and party. Their reports aim only to overload Rwanda with blame while absolving the UN, which is of no use.

Nor can one rely on the current government of the DRC to stop this genocidal process. Not being prophets or military strategists, it is difficult to predict the outcome of events, especially since the vicissitudes of war are always unpredictable. But based on available information today, it is easy to affirm that only the AFC/M23 is capable of ending the genocidal process underway in the DRC.

13.1. Only the AFC/M23 has the political will and determination to stop this genocide

The first reason is that, faced with the structural weakness of the Kinshasa regime, only the AFC/M23 seems to have the political will and evident determination to end the pro-genocidal insecurity of Tutsi communities in eastern DRC. This will and determination give hope for a promising future for Kivu Province and all its inhabitants, including Rwandophone Tutsi of both North and South Kivu. Political will is a prerequisite for final victory. Where there is will, there is a way.

13.2. Only the AFC/M23 is guided by anti-genocide ideology

The second reason is the very ideology of this politico-military organization. Unlike the Congolese government and its genocidal militias, the AFC/M23 has never preached genocidal ideology against any tribe of Kivu. No speech, writing, or declaration from it reflects such ideology. Nothing from it has ever preached hatred or discrimination against any Congolese tribe, whether opposed or not. For the AFC/M23, genocidal ideology is not a fatality. It is a taught culture that can be stopped. There are political solutions that go beyond ethnicism. This is a major lesson that the AFC/M23 offers to the national and international community.

13.3. Only the AFC/M23 has proven that security reigns in the liberated zone

The third reason for hope is the current situation in the "liberated zone." Peace reigns there, life resumes, children go to school, markets are bustling, churches are full: no tribe seems excluded or threatened. There is total inclusivity. Nande, Hunde, Havu, Shi, Fulero, Bembe, Lega, Hutu, and Tutsi live together in harmony. Everywhere, peace is palpable, even if occasional wartime incidents occur. Development is on the horizon. All this is thanks to the peace established by the AFC/M23 in its liberated zone. Hope is now permitted, and this is a very positive sign.

13.4. Only the AFC/M23 pursues the construction of a rule-of-law state

The fourth reason is the undefeated strength of the AFC/M23. It seeks to establish a state of law and freedoms for all Congolese citizens, including Rwandophone Tutsi. Only under this condition could the DRC truly become an inclusive and integrative state, capable of harnessing its resources to lead development in the Great Lakes region. A state of law is essential for all Congolese people, including Rwandophone Tutsi. Why not? This challenge must be met: to establish a state of law for all Congolese without exclusion. Otherwise, other scenarios may unfold. If victorious, the AFC/M23 war could play a major role in reshaping the DRC.

14. And if the DRC were reshaped differently: the possible future of the country

What the DRC lacks most is good leadership to make the country function properly. The former president of M23, Bishop J-M Runiga Lugerero, observed that among the factors preventing the DRC from moving forward are: "exclusion and tribal hatred, political and military dictatorship, the pursuit of personal gain,

abandonment of community interests, and the presence of national and foreign armed troops..."[154].

The road ahead seems long, but already a glimmer of hope appears on the horizon: the AFC-M23 may be capable of showing alternative futures for the country. While its primary mission is to prevent a total genocide from striking the targeted Rwandophone Tutsi, it could also, once victorious, propose new forms of territorial reorganization for the DRC.

14.1. Growing ideas of territorial reorganization

As the Democratic Republic of Congo sinks deeper into violence, denies the rule of law to some of its citizens, and sees poverty increase among its people, the idea of dismantling the country has emerged in the minds of some observers an idea presents for at least thirty years. The American press echoed this well before the 1996 war. Colette Braeckman cites American newspapers that, in 1996–1997, published numerous articles and editorials hypothesizing the breakup or "balkanization" of Congo. She recalls an International Herald Tribune article of December 19, 1996, which wrote that Congo was "the result of an impossible, unnatural union. Colonial borders cannot forever be considered sacrosanct." Braeckman also recalls the Forum for International Policy of October 15, 1996, which advocated the creation of "ethnically homogeneous countries, necessarily involving the redrawing of international borders and requiring significant population resettlement."[155]

This journal even envisaged the creation of separate Hutu and Tutsi states, with the latter possibly located in eastern Congo. It repeated this idea in 2000, adding that Kigali "made no secret of its ambition: to transform Kivu into a buffer zone to secure its borders, and into a settlement area for its nationals crowded in

[154]E.Tommy Tambwe Ushindi. W. op. cit. p. 9.

[155]Colette Braeckman, *Les nouveaux prédateurs, politique des puissances en Afrique Centrale*, Editions Fayard, 2003, pp. 56-58

Rwanda."[156]

Euloge Boissannade, in his book, cites a Lega collective claiming that "at the urgent request of the United States of America and Ugandan President Museveni, Nelson Mandela asked Mobutu's and Kabila's envoys to begin negotiations to revise Zaire's current borders."[157] The same author wondered whether Kagame and Museveni sought to annex Kivu[158]. Thus, Rwanda has been attributed all sorts of intentions, including attempts to establish in eastern Congo Kivu and even Katanga an area governed by a "friendly" regime, where it could resettle surplus populations and exploit minerals.

There is even talk of a secret Lemera Agreement (South Kivu), allegedly concerning Tutsi colonization of Kivu. In reality, nothing was secret; everything happened openly[159]. Nevertheless, myths were created around this "Agreement of Lemera," and myths endure because fanatics believe them as if they were fact.

Other internal agreements nearly divided the DRC. The Lusaka Agreement of 1999 almost split the country into three autonomous states: one under Kabila, one under the RCD, and one under Bemba and allies. Similarly, the failed Sun City Dialogue of April 2002 nearly created two states: one in the southwest and one in the East.[160] Already in 1999, Jeune Afrique (no. 198, January 12–18) asked, "How far will the rebels go?" The article was titled "RDC Congo: Balkanization" and showed a map of the country cut in two. Today, ideas about partitioning Congo are resurfacing and spreading gradually. Four possible models are being advanced, though they would only be feasible if European powers refrained from interfering—for they have always profited from African chaos.

---

[156] Colette Braeckman, *Les nouveaux prédateurs, politique des puissances en Afrique Centrale*, Editions Fayard, 2003, pp. 56-58.

[157] Euloge Boissonnade, op. cit. p.348.

[158] Idem, p.344.

[159] On trouve les Statuts de l'AFDL, son Projet politique et Autres considérations dans la Revue *Congo-Afrique n*°318 d'octobre 1997, pp.495-506

[160] E. Tommy Tambwe Ushindi. W. op. cit. p.9

14.2. Possible models of territorial reorganization

Here are the models currently under discussion:

- The federalist model: The most classic and least disruptive. The DRC would be divided into federated states roughly along current provincial lines. Each federated state would have broad political and economic powers, but there would be superior institutions where all federated states would meet, as in the USA and elsewhere. The aim would be to give more weight to federated states with internal autonomy to manage their specific problems. This idea aligns with decentralization: granting more freedom and power to decentralized entities. Call it the "American model." It requires strong leadership; otherwise, secessionist wars are always possible.
- The independent Kivu model: This would follow the example of South Sudan, which broke away from Sudan to form its own independent state, shattering the myth of untouchable colonial borders. Kivu Province could do the same, whether or not other provinces followed. Call this the "South Sudan model."
- The Eritrean model: In 1950, the UN General Assembly made Eritrea an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia, but Ethiopia annexed it in 1962. Popular liberation movements for Eritrean independence then arose, succeeding in 1993 with the support of Ethiopia's DERG, led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Fighting together, each side achieved its victory. A similar situation could occur in the DRC if, for example, the AFC/M23 succeeded in placing its current president, Corneille Nangaa, in supreme power in Kinshasa, and he then granted independence to Kivu under M23 authority. Nangaa would rule the rest of Congo without Kivu. This would be the "Eritrean model."
- The Yugoslav model: Yugoslavia broke apart into several independent states in the 1990s, giving rise to six countries: Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro,

and Macedonia. This model would suit the DRC in the event of total dismemberment or balkanization, producing multiple independent states. This would be the "Yugoslav model."

Conclusion

After reviewing the security problems facing Congolese Rwandophone Tutsi in the DRC, we conclude that what the country lacks most is clear-sighted leadership, oriented toward the well-being of all its people without exception. The misgovernance of this vast country stems primarily from the weakness and incompetence of the Congolese state, its leaders, and its army—a reality that predates the current president, who has only worsened an already dire situation. Tribal ideologies destroyed this country long before independence and have persisted for nearly 65 years. Today, a new step has been taken: genocidal ideology is spreading at every level, with no visible actor within the current state institutions capable of protecting the targeted citizens. Anti-tutsi hatred is propagated openly and officially. The president of the Republic speaks of genocide without clearly identifying its perpetrators or victims, while failing to enforce law and order. Impunity reigns everywhere. Hate propaganda spreads unchecked. Congo's mineral wealth, which could be a blessing, has instead become its curse yet a good leader, surrounded by a competent team, could transform it into a true source of prosperity. Painful as it is to say, the DRC is a failed state.

In conclusion, what has been presented as a sketch of territorial reorganization for the Democratic Republic of Congo remains only one hypothesis among many, for history alone will reveal new possibilities. Yet territorial restructuring by itself is insufficient, for even a small state can remain captive to tribalism. The Rwandan genocide demonstrated this with tragic clarity: Rwanda was a small nation-state, yet genocide occurred. The DRC is not, in the strict sense, a true nation. It must therefore strive to build an inclusive national state one that transcends tribal divisions

and is guided by a coherent political philosophy rather than by geography or size. Whether as vast as Congo or as limited as Kivu, the decisive factor is not territory but vision.

Meanwhile, the people of the DRC are called upon to reflect seriously on the options that might best serve them. The sooner this reflection leads to action, the better otherwise it will be too late, and the damage irreparable. For today, it is already "one minute to midnight" in the face of the extermination of an entire targeted group. The AFC/M23, with its political vision, could initiate this eventual change. It could even become its standard-bearer, but its victory and political vision are indispensable prerequisites. They appear necessary and sufficient, since numerous past agreements and repeated conflicts have led to nothing. Only its victory, coupled with its vision, could provide sufficient guarantees but this is possible only if the great Western powers refrain from intervening to sow chaos, as they have so often done to their advantage in this unfortunate Congo.

This country needs genuine, clear-sighted leadership, capable of guiding all its people inclusively toward integral development for everyone. Let us hope that the Congolese people can find within themselves such leadership, able to change the situation for the good of all citizens including the Rwandophone Tutsi whom the current rulers seem to disregard entirely. On the contrary, they even preside over an ongoing genocide. Yet a glimmer of hope seems to come from the AFC/M23. Everything is still possible. Let us wish it good fortune and wait to see.

THE CROSS BORDER GENOCIDAL IDEOLOGY: CASE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Author: Dr. Aloys Tegera, Researcher Independent

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the spread of genocidal ideology beyond national borders, using the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It highlights how certain hate speech and extremist networks perpetuate ideas inherited from the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. The author examines the political, security, and social factors that facilitate this cross-border diffusion. The article emphasizes the importance of combating this ideology to prevent new waves of violence and mass atrocities.

Biography: Dr. Aloys Tegera is a Rwandan researcher and analyst recognized for his expertise on the political, economic, and social dynamics of the African Great Lakes region. He is particularly known for his work in the fields of conflict research, governance, and regional development.

He has held leadership positions within research institutions and has collaborated with various academic and international organizations. Through his research, publications, and participation in conferences, Dr. Tegera has contributed to a better understanding of regional issues, particularly in matters of peace, security, and regional integration.

INTRODUCTION

He was called Kennedy Kiproo Lilan, of Kenyan nationality. He escaped just barely from lynching by an enraged crowd in Goma on the date of June 1, 2024, because of his face attributed to the Tutsi whom perhaps he had never met in his life. And yet, he was going to die for the sole reason that he resembles the Tutsi who are hunted everywhere in the east of Congo, massacred, killed, lynched, burned alive and sometimes eaten for what they are. Certainly, an extermination slowly but surely.

The discrimination of the Tutsi and their qualification as "false negroes" foreigners to the region of the African Great Lakes is an invention of the first German and Belgian explorers, consolidated and taught by the missionaries. The latter discovered a kingdom of Rwanda organized and structured and were persuaded that such a level of civilization and know how did not fit with the idea they had made of the "true negro." They concluded that the power structuring the kingdom of Rwanda must come from elsewhere, probably from the Cushitic Nile Valley or perhaps of Caucasian origin. The Hamitic myth, dear to the classifiers of races in Europe of the 19th century, was born and will be stuck to the Tutsi until today. The appropriation of this racialist scheme by local African elites was going to be translated into a genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

In the aftermath of the independence of the Belgian Congo, the discrimination of the Tutsi in the east of the DRC goes back to March 1962, when the elected Nande, Hunde and Nyanga demanded the creation of the province of North Kivu without having previously discussed with their Kinyarwanda speaking counterparts from the territories of Rutshuru, Masisi and Nyiragongo. The troubles, the massacres, the destruction of the goods of the Tutsi that followed, were claimed in the name of a local patriotism that wants to drive out of the national territory the "foreigners speaking Kinyarwanda" and chase the survivors into their native homeland, Rwanda.

In this paper, I will focus on the metastases of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda of 1994 in the east of Congo when nearly one million Rwandan refugees landed on the shores of the city of Goma and Bukavu.

The genocidal ideology embedded in the army and the Congolese institutions

The massive arrival of Rwandan refugees in July 1994 led by an army of ex FAR and Interahamwe militias responsible for the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the failure of the Mobutu government to disarm them as Tanzania did and to settle them at the border with Rwanda, marked the beginning of insecurity and chaos in South and North Kivu. There had been ethnic clashes in North Kivu since March 1993 between Hutu, Hunde and Tutsi.

A report of Oxfam[161] and of Caritas Secours International of Belgium[162] estimates that about 7,000 people were killed in these ethnic clashes. However, the alliance between the Congolese Hutu militias and the defeated ex FAR and Interahamwe changed the balance of forces on the ground in favor of the Congolese Hutu community. The reinvigorated Hutu fighters defeated the Hunde militias in Masisi and Rutshuru and pushed the Congolese Tutsi who had survived the massacres into exile in Rwanda and Uganda. The local Hunde elite denounced the constitution of a "Hutuland,"[163] but the true impact in the east of Congo was the implantation of genocidal ideology[164]. The first step was that of hunting Congolese Tutsi considered as a "fifth column of Rwanda in DRC."

[161] Oxfam Report of 12 August 1993.

[162] Libre Belgique of 24 September 1993.

[163] MUHIMA, E., « Un génocide pour un Hutuland », unpublished, 1996. Letter of the indigenous communities of North Kivu, " Plan d'annexion des Régions du Nord-Kivu et Sud-Kivu à la République Rwandaise", Goma, November 11, 1994.

[164] BUCYALIMWE MARARO, "Interprétation des événements dans la Région des Grands Lacs à la lumière du document 'Les Protocoles de Sion ", Conference, Rutshuru, 15 June 1994.

Those who could afford it carved with money their path to Rwanda and Uganda. The last group of Congolese Tutsi gathered at the Goma town hall crossed the Gisenyi border in May 1996 and settled near the "Petite Barrière" before being relocated to Karongi and Byumba shortly after the outbreak of Laurent Désiré Kabila's war. The second stage was the economic and social control of the territory. The FDLR had become the new masters. They left Rwanda carrying whatever wealth they could, including assets from the national bank, and possessed sufficient funds to establish various enterprises in partnership with local Congolese associates.

The third stage was the consolidation of their military strength[165]. The collapse of the alliance between Laurent Désiré Kabila's AFDL and Rwanda, followed by the second rebellion of the RCD/Goma in August 1998, provided the FDLR with a golden opportunity to forge closer ties and collaborate with successive Congolese governments. They were integrated into the FARDC or employed as auxiliary troops, fighting side by side with allies who supported successive Congolese regimes. These forces were emboldened by hate speech, such as Yerodia Ndombasi once calling the Tutsi "vermin" to be exterminated[166], or more recently Benoît Mukumbatiya, a Mai Mai Nande, declaring that "a good Tutsi is a dead Tutsi; a good Tutsi belongs in the cemetery."[167] Brothers in arms became brothers in spirit. Genocidal ideology, until then unfamiliar to Congolese society, began to cement social relations, fuel hate discourse, and take root in the DRC. Thirty years later, what historian Jean Pierre Chrétien has termed a "tropical Nazism" remains alive in the Great Lakes region.

Eastern Congo thus proved fertile ground for genocidal ideology. Although the Banyarwanda community of Rutshuru and Masisi experienced fluctuations, it nevertheless managed to unite and

[165] Pomfret, J. "Rwandans Led Revolt in Congo." *The Washington Post*, July 9, 1997.
[166] Braeckman, C. *La question congolaise. L'Afrique centrale après Mobutu*. Paris: Fayard, 1999.
[167] Audio statement, May 31, 2024.

fight on a common front, particularly in the early 1960s[168]. In the 1980s, a Hutu association known as the Mutuelle des Agriculteurs des Virunga (MAGRIVI) in Rutshuru and Masisi cultivated anti Tutsi narratives in close collaboration with propaganda organs of the Habyarimana regime, such as the journal Kangura, which disseminated genocidal ideology[169]. The central idea was to distance the Hutu from the Tutsi, to assert the singularity of the muhutu wherever he came from[170], to nurture and consolidate "Bantu solidarity" with so called indigenous ethnic groups, and thereby isolate the Tutsi as the sole "foreigners" intent on imposing their "Hima Tutsi Empire" in the Great Lakes region[171]. The most recent demand for "Gihutu" as the language of Congolese Hutu is a logical outcome of this racial radicalism and of the deliberate distancing between Congolese Hutu and Tutsi as two distinct cultural entities.

The claim for Gihutu as the language of Congolese Hutu was conceived to integrate them fully into the broader Congolese indigenous community, following the Vangu Commission of 1991, which sought to determine who was Congolese and who was not. This claim excluded Congolese Tutsi, whose language is Kinyarwanda, thereby identifying them with Rwandans.

[168]Rukatsi, B. "*L'intégration des immigrés au Zaïre : le cas des personnes originaires du Rwanda*." Doctoral thesis in Social, Political, and Economic Sciences, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), November 1988.

[169]Ndahiro, T. *The Friends of Evil: When NGOs Support Genocidaires*. FrancegenocideTutsi.org, 2013, p. 68.

Ndahiro recalls the "Tenth Hutu Commandment" published by Kagura, which declared: "The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961, and the Hutu ideology must be taught to every Muhutu at all levels. Every Hutu must widely disseminate this ideology. Any Muhutu who persecutes his fellow Muhutu for having read, disseminated, and taught this ideology is a trait.

[170]Bucyalimwe Mararo, "Interprétation des événements", op. cit.

[171]Report on the Current Situation in the Provinces of North and South Kivu, July–August 1997. See also Ndahiro, T., op. cit., p. 63.

Professor Ruriho Kibambasi's attempt to rewrite the history of the Hutu of North Kivu[172] by transcribing the major stages of Bantu history with a periodization reducing Bantu history to that of the Hutu is more an ideological construction than a scholarly endeavor. His aim was to establish certain assertions, notably that the Hutu of North Kivu constitute a distinct ethnic group sharing the same historical trajectory as other groups in eastern DRC, and that they possess their own language, like other Congolese ethnicities, with the glossonym corresponding to the ethnonym "Gihutu" not to be confused with "Kinyarwanda," the language of Rwanda.

This effort to distance the Hutu from Rwanda disregards the trajectories of various North Kivu Hutu clans, such as the Abasinga, who are said to have passed through Mulera in Rwanda before settling permanently in Rutshuru. Indeed, clan structures ubwoko in Rwanda, ruganda in Bunyoro, ebika in Buganda, ishanja among the Havus, and others combining kinship, exogamy, solidarity rules, and symbolic codes, serve as identity references in the collective consciousness of Great Lakes populations. According to Chrétien, the geography of these clan structures, combined with oral testimonies, provides insight into their history across a relatively limited space, transcending modern political borders, over a period of up to three centuries[173].

These clan structures encompass both Hutu and Tutsi social categories in Rwanda, which Ruriho sought to dissociate in time and space. The vast majority of the eighteen clans identified by Marcel D'Hertefelt[174] are present in North Kivu, combining Hutu and Tutsi, with few exceptions for instance, the Abungura clan composed solely of Hutu, and the Abasigi and Abagiri clans,

[172]Ruriho Kibambasi, F., *Introduction à l'histoire des Hutu du Nord-Kivu (Zaïre)*,, Volume I. Lubumbashi, February 1992.

[173]CHRETIEN, J-P. *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Deux mille ans d'histoire*. Paris: Aubier, 2000, p. 73.

[174]D'Hertefert, M. *Les clans du Rwanda ancien : éléments d'ethnosociologie et d'ethnohistoire*. Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa (MRAC), 1971.

not identified by D'Hertefelt, found in Buhumba in present day Nyiragongo. What began as Ruriho's theory of "Gihutu" as the language of the Bahutu has now been appropriated by Congolese Hutu of North Kivu and by the FDLR. Genocidal ideology has played a decisive role in this radicalization.

Local Alliances of the FDLR

The Nyatura

The strategic collaboration of the FDLR with local Congolese militias not only reinforced its combat capacity, but also implanted and spread the ideology of genocide. The Nyatura allies are young men of the Congolese Hutu community who present themselves as defenders of their community. Today, some are members of provincial and national assemblies, others are integrated into the national army and into several institutions of the Republic. Others, finally, have chosen to remain in their respective villages, armed, with the aim of defending themselves in case of threat against their community. These armed Nyatura militias control the rural zones of Masisi and Rutshuru territories. They benefited from the support of the Rwandan FDLR in training and military equipment, and some of them, such as Dominique Ndaruhutse Kamanzi alias "Domi," still collaborate openly today with the FDLR in Bwito, Rutshuru territory.

In August 2018, when the Rwandan armed group in exile, the National Liberation Front (FLN), attacked from the southwest in the Nyungwe forest, Dominique Ndaruhutse was among the Nyatura mobilized by the FDLR in Virunga National Park to lend them support[175]. The continuation of FDLR fighting in Bwito and elsewhere could explain the alliance between the FDLR and the Congolese militias who serve as shields for their operations.

[175]Tegera, B.A. "Abazungu : une nouvelle coalition au Masisi," Pole Institute, Dossier, May 2021, p. 9.

In fact, the local Congolese militias have other concerns. Some are former demobilized fighters disappointed by promises made but never kept. Others are young men mobilized for land claims that their parents occupied in a context of population movements since the 1990s and whose claims were never clarified. Finally, others are young men from families expelled from concessions that their owners recovered in 2019 in Kibabi and Osso Banyungu in Masisi. In August 2020, a meeting was held in Katoyi sector, Masisi territory, during which certain Hutu members of the North Kivu provincial assembly were present. The participants were encouraged to attack the properties and farms of the Tutsi to force them to flee to Rwanda and thus offer to the Hutu populations the opportunity to occupy their lands. Thus, the Nyatura of Masisi territory combined, before their legitimization within the Wazalendo, the harassment of military and police positions with systematic attacks against the agro-pastoral farms of the Tutsi, in the hope of expelling them and eventually occupying their lands. That said, the alliances of the FDLR went beyond Kinyarwanda speakers to include other armed ethnic groups, namely the Hunde of the "Patriotic Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS)."

The APCLS

Certainly, the Hunde militias have fought the Banyarwanda in Masisi and Bwito since 1993, but the birth of the APCLS in 2006 was rather motivated by the presence of the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) of Laurent Nkunda Mihigo in Bashali Mokoto and Bashali Kayembe in Masisi territory. The latter overshadowed provincial governor Eugène Serufuli Ngayabaseka, and his annoyance was such that he resolved to create a new militia named the Patriotes de la Résistance Congolaise (PARECO), headed by certain Hutu officers who had just defected from the CNDP.

In order to give PARECO an indigenous face against Laurent Nkunda, labeled "foreigner," an alliance was sought with a Nande fighter, Kakule Sikuli Lafontaine, and a Hunde fighter, Janvier Karairi. This alliance did not last long. It split into three groups: a Hutu PARECO represented by Colonel Mugabo Hassan, currently a FARDC general who directed offensives against the M23 in Masisi in May 2023; a Nande PARECO represented by Kakule Sikuli Lafontaine; and a Hunde PARECO represented by Janvier Buingo Karairi, who later preferred to change the name to APCLS and settled deep in Masisi at Lukweti. With the legitimization of his militia within Wazalendo, Karairi was triumphantly welcomed in spring 2023 in his town of Kitchanga to confront the M23 in Bashali Mokoto and in Bwito.

At its beginnings, APCLS commander Janvier Karairi benefited from unwavering support from the Hunde ethnic mutuality Bushenge, before cracks appeared when Mapenzi Kihule defected to join the renovated Ndume Defense (NDC R) of Guidon Shimirayi Mwissa, with whom he remained until July 2020. Among other things, Mapenzi Kihule reproached Janvier Karairi for collaborating with the Rwandan FDLR an alliance of necessity and not of conviction, which Karairi needed especially when FARDC military operations attacked him in March 2015 and August 2016. Since then, Karairi has always allied himself with FDLR elements to compensate for his weakness. An active FDLR member, Kambuzi, operating in the Osso Banyungu and Bapfuna chiefdoms, is a former collaborator of Janvier Karairi. The Nande PARECO of Sikuli Lafontaine also works hand in hand with the FDLR RUD Urunana branch in southern Lubero territory, notably in Bunyatenge. It thus appears that the FDLR have succeeded in a masterstroke by rallying local Congolese communities who serve as shields in Lubero, Masisi, and Rutshuru[176].

[176]TEGERA, B.A. *Abazungu*, op. cit., p. 13.

Human Losses from Genocidal Ideology

In the absence of a proper memory work initiative led by a legitimate and competent authority such as effective police force the victims of genocidal ideology in eastern Congo will never be fully known. Apart from a few documented massacres, such as the 180 people killed at the Mokoto monastery on May 12, 1996; the 149 people killed at the Adventist University of Mudende on August 18, 1997; and the 1,641 people killed at the same site in Mudende on December 10, 1997, most other massacres are known only through survivors' testimonies.

For example, Dusabe, who lived in the Bashali Kayembe group in Masisi territory, lost 20 family members including brothers, sisters in law, nephews, and nieces. A systematic inventory is urgently needed among victims living in refugee camps in Rwanda and Uganda, as each survivor carries their own story and list of loved ones lost.

Between 2018 and 2024, the association ISOKO, a mutual aid group of Tutsi from North Kivu, conducted a group-by-group inventory and estimated that 2,500 people were killed and 5,000 went missing. A sample of documented victims with photos shows that three quarters were killed by the Nyatura militia, and the remainder by the FARDC. No investigation has been carried out for the missing people, most of whom are now presumed dead. In South Kivu, a committee tasked with documenting human and material losses among the Banyamulenge estimated that between 2017 and 2022, 1,500 people were killed, 2,145 kidnapped, and 6,057 arbitrarily imprisoned. These losses are attributed to the Mai Mai Biloze Bishabuke and Yakutumba militias, allies of the FDLR.

In Ituri, the Hema often wrongly associated with the Tutsi despite their distinct histories have been hunted and killed by the Lendu militia known as CODECO. A council of Hema elders estimates that between 2017 and 2023, more than 4,000 people were killed and thousands more went missing.

Victims of genocidal ideology in eastern Congo are not limited to Congolese Tutsi or Hema in Ituri. Other ethnic groups also suffer heavily from the presence of the FDLR in their traditional homelands.

The FDLR and its allied militias exploit local populations for food and financing. In Buramo village, Masisi territory, a farmer whose identity is withheld for his family's safety was killed by Nyatura for failing to deliver 15 kilograms of beans on time. This was part of a tax in kind after harvest, called "Ndengera buzima" (literally, "tax for physical survival, to sleep and wake up alive"). Hundreds of people have lost their lives for failing to pay such taxes imposed by the FDLR and its allies. Among the estimated 6.1 million[177] internally displaced persons, hundreds of thousands have died from hunger and epidemics in unsanitary camps where they languished due to insecurity and war.

The Material Losses of Genocidal Ideology

The destruction of residential houses, of basic infrastructures such as schools and health centers, as well as of the basic agro pastoral economies, amounts to millions of U.S. dollars. When the FDLR entered eastern Congo in 1994, North Kivu was considered the granary of the country, supplying foodstuffs, dairy products, and meat to the major cities of the country Kinshasa, Kisangani, and Lubumbashi. One year later, in 1995, the entire cattle herd, estimated at more than 10 million, had been destroyed, so that when the rebellion of Laurent Désiré Kabila's AFDL took the country in May 1997, populations suffering from malnutrition hunted rats as their only source of protein.

Thirty years later, the cattle and goat farms that had been reconstructed were once again pillaged and destroyed. Between 2017 and 2022, in South Kivu, the cattle of the Banyamulenge pillaged are estimated at 452,675. In North Kivu, the association

[177] According to International Organisation for Migrations (IOM), 15 June 2023.

Isoko, which carried out an inventory group by group between 2018 and 2023, estimates at 1,478,000 cattle pillaged. The commander of military operations in Masisi, Major General Mayanga, encouraged the Nyatura militias, legitimized and renamed Wazalendo to support the FARDC, to pillage the cattle of the Tutsi in order to feed themselves and finance themselves rather than wait for government rations. He exhorted FARDC soldiers at the front, who were demanding their rations, to pillage the cattle of the Tutsi who allegedly finance the M23.

The genocidal ideology implanted by the FDLR in eastern Congo is a weapon of mass destruction intended to erase all trace of the Tutsi in the region. In a methodical and systematic manner, this genocidal ideology has used blood ties within the Congolese Hutu, matrimonial ties with other Congolese ethnic groups, commercial ties with associates in several economic sectors, and political and military ties with successive Congolese governments. Genocidal ideology proves to be a formidable machine of eradication of the Tutsi in Congo and elsewhere in the Great Lakes region. The creators of narratives who present the FDLR as a residual force that would be only the shadow of itself deliberately seek to obscure the reality of this radical violence that the FDLR has carried out for thirty years.

Filip Reyntjens: "Researcher-Actor" in the Great Lakes Region: what scientific expertise?

Author: Hon. Dr. Jean-Damascène Bizimana

ABSTRACT



This article examines the role and influence of Filip Reyntjens in political and academic analyses of the Great Lakes region. It questions the boundary between his role as a researcher and that of an actor engaged in political debates. The author analyzes his public positions and their impact on the understanding of regional dynamics. Finally, the article raises questions about the scientific rigor and objectivity of his expertise.

Biography: Hon. Dr. Jean-Damascène Bizimana is the Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement of Rwanda. He has held several positions within the Government of Rwanda, notably as a Senator and as Executive Secretary of the former National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG). He has also worked as a consultant for various academic institutions and civil society organizations and has served as a member of the boards of several institutions and commissions.

Dr. Bizimana is a scholar who has published numerous articles on national, regional, and international geopolitics, as well as on the history and consequences of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, including issues related to genocidal ideology and its denial. He is the author of three books published in French and Kinyarwanda: Inzira ya Jenoside yakorewe Abatutsi (2014); La contribution du Tribunal pénal international à l'évolution de la justice pénale internationale (2004); and L'Église et le génocide au Rwanda (2001).

INTRODUCTION

On 8 September 2025, the Belgian Egmont Institute, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, decided to ban a conference at which Professor Filip Reyntjens was to present his book "Modern Rwanda. A Political History."[178] The fact that Belgian diplomats decided to cancel a conference that was billed as 'academic" confirms that the scientific credibility of Reyntjens' publications on Rwanda has been called into question. The Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' communiqué made this abundantly clear: 'Given the links between the FPS Foreign Affairs and the Egmont Institute and taking into account the tensions between Professor Reyntjens and the Rwandan authorities, the event could be interpreted as an unfriendly gesture by Belgium towards Rwanda.'

The least that can be said is that Filip Reyntjens' status as an expert is far from unanimous, both in Rwanda and among his academic colleagues, and even in political and diplomatic circles. His example shows how harmful the role of these 'experts' can be in the search for peaceful solutions to the armed conflicts that have been raging in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, since 1994. This analysis aims to shed light on this issue. For the sake of clarity, honesty and scientific objectivity, our analysis will be based on verifiable facts, primarily Reyntjens' own writings and statements.

I. Academic distortions in the treatment of Rwanda

Filip Reyntjens arrived in Rwanda in July 1976 as part of a cooperation programme between the law faculties of the University of Antwerp and the National University of Rwanda.

[178]The book's advertisement states that Reyntjens outlines Rwanda's political history from the mid-19th century to the present day. What a biased undertaking, considering that Reyntjens is not a historian, and moreover, over the past thirty years, he has spent only five days in Rwanda, from 17 to 22 October 1994!

An analysis of Reyntjens' initial contacts and experiences in Rwanda reveals a profound disconnect from the scientific neutrality required of his position as an academic researcher, which has had a significant impact on the credibility of his publications over the past three decades.

1.1. Reyntjens: militant and activist, according to his own words

Filip Reyntjens describes himself as a 'researcher-activist'[179] and thereby acknowledges that he deviates from academic ethics in order to espouse and defend strong political views against Rwanda: 'On this point, the author acknowledges his commitment and even his activism in the face of the recent and dramatic history of Rwanda and Burundi'[180]. He adds: 'The bridges with the political world are never broken. (...) Although I am a lawyer by training, and more specifically a constitutionalist, the relevance of law has gradually eroded, and I have shifted towards political analysis and contemporary history.' He is keen to play down any criticism he may receive: 'I have admitted and even claimed my activism (...) We meet with stakeholders and create networks which, by their very nature, develop a structure and a public face. (...) Even when we do not choose to be activists, we are still involved in political practices.[181]'

Even though Reyntjens appears confident, he does not stand by his choices when questioned about his bias against academic requirements. He resorts to slander and intimidation by insulting those who point out his mistakes, calling them 'RPF fanatics, idiots, stupid, poor, ridiculous, trolls, etc.[182]' On the other hand,

[179]The title of his book is "Les risques du métier. Trois décennies comme chercheur–acteur au Rwanda et au Burundi", L'Harmattan in 2009. In this book, he attempts to justify the frequent criticism directed at him for his ethnically biased views and his evident hostility toward the RPF and the Rwandan government.

[180]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, 2009, cover page

[181]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.124

[182]He often resorts to such insults on social media when he lacks valid arguments to respond to criticism and questions regarding his writings and statements.

he plays the victim by arguing that people are attacking him personally rather than his arguments.[183] However, it is impossible to understand an author's ideas without knowing his personality and motivations and without examining his intellectual capacity. In this case, the fundamental question concerns the credibility of Reyntjens' expertise on Rwanda, a country he describes himself as an 'expert', an 'opportunist' and a 'political activist', even though, as indicated above, he has not set foot there for more than thirty years. He publishes on the basis of unreliable information gathered mostly on social media, which comes from perpetrators of genocide whom he has associated with in the past, their sympathizers, or 'opponents' who have left Rwanda, often for reasons related to crimes they committed there.

Finally, another motive behind Reyntjens' activism is his membership of Amnesty International. When Reyntjens arrived in Rwanda, he was not just an academic assistant, he was also an Amnesty International activist, for whom he called for attention to be paid to Rwanda: "I invite Amnesty International to take a greater interest in the country.[184] "It may therefore be this link with Amnesty International that explains Reyntjens' shift into politics and his desire to influence the fate of Rwanda, rather than scientific discipline.

1.2. Admissions of vulgarity in his activism

Recent revelations circulating on social network X refer to Reyntjens' past in Rwanda, where he allegedly frequented young Rwandan girls, which ended badly. Reyntjens is said to have had an intimate relationship with a young Tutsi girl from Butare, who left him because she could no longer tolerate her partner's

[183]For a more in-depth analysis, see Jacques Morel's article, "Le professeur Reyntjens, expert du tribunal international pour le Rwanda et ami de génocidaires" ("Professor Reyntjens, Expert of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and Friend of Genocidaires"), 2019, available at www.francegenocidetutsi.org

[184]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.16

ties to dignitaries of the Habyarimana regime, responsible for discriminatory and repressive policies in Rwanda between 1973 and 1994. Reyntjens is said to have become angry and stormed out, swearing open hatred towards the Tutsis.

It should be noted that Reyntjens lived permanently in Butare between 1976 and 1978 as a professor at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Rwanda, and then made regular visits of varying lengths between 1979 and 1987. Reyntjens categorically rejects this accusation, calling it false. We have no knowledge of this and give him the benefit of the doubt.

However, Reyntjens himself does not hide the fact that he behaved in a manner that was not very commendable and that may raise questions. He writes: "My first contact with Rwanda dates back to 17 July 1976. I don't remember who said that you are born where you become aware, but I find this phrase very applicable to my case. (...) It was also in Butare that I took my first steps in Burundi, in a context that was initially less academic. As Bujumbura was at the time a much livelier place than the "villages" of Butare and even Kigali, I sometimes went there at the weekend to enjoy the good restaurants, nightclubs and lake[185]. Such an admission could easily lend credence to revelations about his failures with Tutsi girls, which allegedly upset him to the point of arousing general and senseless hatred.

1.3. Witness to ethnic discrimination against the Tutsi

Filip Reyntjens knowingly forges the history of the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi. He himself states that since his arrival in Rwanda in 1976, he has witnessed the misdeeds of the Habyarimana regime's policy of discrimination and oppression, which flagrantly violated the most basic human rights of the Tutsi. He testifies: "In 1977,' he writes, "we did something that had not been seen in Rwanda for a long time. We needed to recruit a secretary, and we advertised the vacancy rather than

[185]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.8

hiring someone through "pistonné" (connections). Worse still, we organized a competition and selected the best candidate, who turned out to be Tutsi. A few weeks later, I was summoned by the head of the Prefectural Intelligence Service, which reported to the all-powerful Central Intelligence Service, headed at the time by the feared Commander Théoneste Lizinde. The man informed me that following this recruitment, we would have two Tutsi out of four administrative and technical staff members, whereas the "quotas" stipulated ten per cent Tutsi; we could therefore not recruit Libérata"[186].

1.4. Admission of methodological shortcomings

Reyntjens acknowledges that his methodology for dealing with Rwanda is flawed, which undoubtedly detracts from the quality of his publications on the country: 'I never kept a diary, mainly out of laziness. What I recount is therefore based on my memories (...) but I cannot rule out the possibility that some of my memories may have been tainted by time or by subsequent events.' Despite these serious acknowledged shortcomings, Reyntjens perseveres, noting, 'If I had to do it again, I think I would.[187]' He goes so far as to assert his scientific subjectivity: 'I write from my own subjectivity (...) I expose myself, but I am in good theoretical company'[188]. Readers are warned!

[186]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.9
[187]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.18
[188]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.129

II. Reyntjens' publications on Rwanda in the light of scientific ethics

The recognition of his activism means that Reyntjens' personality, political considerations and publications on Rwanda are completely biased and erroneous.

2.1. Author of a discriminatory Rwandan Constitution

On 20 December 1978, a constitution drafted by Filip Reyntjens was adopted in Rwanda. Its author claims that this Constitution was one of the best in Africa: "I remain proud of our text, which was, at least on paper, one of the best African constitutions of the time. " Despite this praise, the Constitution that Reyntjens presented to Habyarimana was rather discriminatory in several of its provisions and violated many fundamental human rights and principles enshrined in international conventions.

Firstly, its preamble caused scandal by legitimizing the killings that had targeted the Tutsi since November 1959, describing them as an act of liberation: 'Considering the work of liberation undertaken by the Revolution of 1959 (...), Determined to continue the work of renewal undertaken since the memorable day of 7 July 1973, with a view to safeguarding the achievements of the Revolution of 1959 (...), Establishes and adopts this Constitution for the Republic of Rwanda'.

Such constitutional recognition amounts to legitimizing the exercise of power based on racism, discrimination and ethnic killings targeting part of Rwanda's population, the Tutsi. At the time of drafting this Constitution, Reyntjens knew that the Rwandan regime had enshrined the practice of ethnicist and criminal logic, notably through the massacres of more than 2,000 Tutsi in the prefecture of Byumba in March 1962 and the genocide committed in December 1963 in the prefectures of Gikongoro, Cyangugu, Kibungo, Kibuye, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi, Kigali and Bugesera, which claimed the lives of more than 35,000 Tutsi. Reyntjens was fully

aware of this cruel reality and had a duty to draft a constitution that enshrined respect for human rights.

Secondly, discrimination is enshrined in several provisions that support the MRND as the sole political party and a powerful president who manages all state affairs alone. Thus, Article 7 rejects any democratic opening: "The Rwandan people are politically organized within the National Revolutionary Movement for Development, the sole political formation outside of which no political activity may be carried out. (...) Every Rwandan is automatically a member of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development".

In Article 40, Filip Reyntjens' Constitution grants the president of the MRND the sole and exclusive right to stand as a candidate for the office of president of the Republic: 'The president of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development is the only candidate for the presidency of the Republic. 'The same article then excludes young people from acceding to presidential power: 'The candidate for the presidency of the Republic must be thirty-five years of age. It also excludes term limits: 'The President of the Republic is eligible for re-election.' This article therefore legally authorises the President of the Republic, in this case General Juvénal Habyarimana, to run for election alone as many times as he wishes. When drafting this provision, was Reyntjens unaware of the value of democratic transition?

Reyntjens' Rwandan Constitution goes further in Article 42 by strengthening all powers within the MRND, establishing that in the event of 'prevention, inability to express his will, resignation, death or any other cause of cessation of his activities, the President of the Republic shall be replaced by the Secretary-General of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development until the election of a new President of the Republic'.

When Reyntjens drafted the 1978 Constitution, Rwanda had laws and regulations limiting Tutsi access to secondary and higher education. In an attempt to survive these discriminatory laws, some parents, mainly Tutsi, had joined forces to create private

schools such as APACOPE in Kigali and CEFOTEC in Butare. The state blocked them by not recognising their diplomas. Reyntjens was well aware of this, but instead of correcting this injustice in his constitutional text, he clearly reinforced it in Article 26: "(...) The recognition of diplomas or certificates from private education, as well as education provided, in whole or in part, shall be regulated by law". Why did Reyntjens not remove this discrimination and write a text that complied with international standards enshrining the right to education for all children?

Filip Reyntjens persisted in supporting these positions even at a time when he must have realized that he had made serious mistakes in supporting an oppressive regime. In November 1990, for example, he collaborated with Belgian NGOs on a brochure entitled 'Rwanda. What now?', in which he supported the ethnic discrimination practiced by the MRND regime on the basis of the 1978 Constitution, noting that it had brought peace to Rwanda: 'The quota system has undoubtedly contributed to ethnic pacification in Rwanda. This is one of the merits of the Second Republic, which has been successful in this area. (...) The regime has achieved significant success in the areas of development, democracy and respect for human rights'[189].

2.2. Declared compromises with the MRND regime

Filip Reyntjens admits his close ties with the dignitaries of the Habyarimana regime, while downplaying the notorious criminality of that regime, for which he served as legal and political advisor: "The regime is an ordinary military dictatorship, as can be found everywhere in Africa, (...) it was not the worst on the continent.[190]" Reyntjens then acknowledges his very close associations with the dignitaries of that regime: "The beers I shared with ministers, officers, and senior officials on their native hills may have brought me too close to them".

[189]Philippe Brewaeys, Rwanda 1994 : Noirs et Blancs menteurs, Racine, Bruxelles, 2013
[190]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.17

These ties are not limited to merely sharing beers and brochettes; they also become a source of inspiration for his publications: "Some of these encounters are even rather peculiar. As they progress in their careers, within the judiciary and high administration, in politics, the army, or even in business, my former students also become a formidable network, with its advantages and disadvantages: the advantage of access, the disadvantage of proximity and, consequently, probably a certain leniency on my part"[191].

The word 'leniency' encompasses many things that can be summed up in a single word: compromises. The continuation of his account reveals this. Reyntjens indeed acknowledges that he had obtained a special status that allowed him to impose his proposals on President Habyarimana: "I unquestionably exploit my status as a foreigner, which, in a country like Rwanda, has more latitude than that of a national. This status allows me to gain fairly easy access to the highest authorities of the country, including the President of the Republic, and to speak to them with a frankness that a Rwandan could only dream of, even to the point of bypassing a powerful and feared man like Sagatwa. I say this not only because it gives me an advantage I do not really deserve, but also because the risks I face are very limited, unlike those borne by Rwandans"[192].

2.3. Support to the Habyarimana regime in refining its communication

"At the beginning of the war in October 1990, Reyntjens helped the Habyarimana regime refine its communication capabilities to counter the FPR's diplomacy. He expresses it in these terms: 'I am associated with an initiative of the regime, which is attempting to regain the upper hand in the media war it is losing to the FPR.

[191]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.19
[192]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.45

In early November [1990], I am contacted by Fabien Singaye, a diplomat serving at the Rwandan embassy in Bern. He informs me that the government plans to send two missions, one to Europe and another to North America, to inform public opinion, and asks if I would agree to participate in a conference to be organized in Geneva as part of this initiative. I am obviously hesitant: although I believe that a counterbalance to FPR propaganda is necessary, I do not wish to be used by government propaganda either. I request additional information, and I am somewhat reassured by the composition of the commission. I know two of its members, the historians Ferdinand Nahimana and Emmanuel Ntezimana, who are professors at the National University of Rwanda; even though the former would later be tried and convicted by the ICTR, at that time I have no reason to distance myself from them"[193].

Let us specify three serious facts. First, Reyntjens is fully aware of the criminal nature of the Habyarimana regime, which he nonetheless agrees to assist. Second, he is equally well aware of the character of Fabien Singaye, who is an agent of the Rwandan intelligence services stationed at the Rwandan embassy in Switzerland. Singaye is very close to the presidential family, being the son of a prominent Gisenyi businessman, André Singaye, a friend of Habyarimana, and the son-in-law of Félicien Kabuga, as he is married to Pauline Musanabera, one of Kabuga's daughters. It should also be noted that two sons of President Habyarimana married Félicien Kabuga's daughters: Françoise Mukanziza, wife of Léon Habyarimana, and Bernadette Uwamariya, wife of Jean Pierre Habyarimana.

Finally, Reyntjens is well aware of Ferdinand Nahimana's extremist anti-tutsi stance. Thus, agreeing to collaborate with such individuals, while noting that he was reassured by their participation in the anti-RPF campaign, reflects a bias far from intellectual integrity. He admits it himself: "From the beginning of the war [1990], I clearly take sides against the RPF attack. I did not

[193]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*

know the RPF before October 1990, and my position is therefore not inspired by any preexisting antipathy. (...) On the one hand, since the RPF is essentially composed of Tutsis[194] (...) My 'anti-RPF' position at the start of the war, with its corollary—the perception of objective support for the regime—was appropriate. However, it was also uncomfortable, since I was aware of the flaws of the ruling power. (...) One could say that by taking sides against the FPR, I chose the camp of the incumbent regime"[195].

[194]This tendency to describe the RPF as a movement composed solely of Tutsi is false. For example, Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe, who was president of the RPF, was not Tutsi nor were other leading figures such as Pasteur Bizimungu, Seth Sendashonga, and others.

[195]Reytjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.27

III. Reyntjens and the handling of the Genocide committed against the Tutsi: outrageous denialism

Reyntjens theoretically acknowledges the existence of the Genocide against the Tutsi, but he completely distorts its components, thus clearly aligning himself with denialism.

3.1. Falsification of facts and balancing of crimes

Since 1994, Reyntjens has been obsessed with proving at all costs that there was not a single Genocide in Rwanda and that, consequently, the RPF is responsible for a second genocide against the Hutu.

Some examples:

On February 9, 1995, the École Nationale d'Administration in Paris organized a roundtable on Rwanda, with Filip Reyntjens as a speaker. His interventions were extremely biased and aggressive, comparing the Rwandan government to the perpetrators of genocide, while ignoring the fact that this government was fighting to rebuild a country devastated by those perpetrators and in which it bore no responsibility: 'If there had not been a genocide, the international community would not tolerate the current situation. In Rwanda, the worst is yet to come"[196].

Two months later, on April 24, 1995, interviewed by the Flemish newspaper De Morgen, he expressed a denialist opinion, attributing killings in areas not under RPF control to the RPF and thereby minimizing the gravity of the Genocide against the Tutsi: "I would not be surprised if some of the bodies of the victims recovered last year from Lake Victoria are in part RPF victims. When Byumba surrendered in April 1994, there were thousands of deaths.

[196]Jean-François Dupaquier, « Rwanda : le révisionnisme, poursuite du génocide par d'autres moyens », in R. Verdier, E. Decaux et J.P. Chrétien (Editeurs), Rwanda : un génocide du XXème siècle, L'Harmattan, 1995, p.135-136

In Bugesera and the Southeast, also thousands of deaths occurred. According to some sources[197], the RPF killed more there than the Interahamwe. There is a creeping genocide occurring in Rwanda. (...) What is happening today is far more serious than what happened under the former regime".

It cannot be repeated enough: the RPF was fighting against Hutu soldiers and militias who were killing defenseless Tutsi civilians. The RPF fought to stop the genocide, not to murder civilians. The factual truth is that it was these Hutu genocidaires from the interim government, its armed forces, and its militias who killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsi in the locations cited by Reyntjens, including the towns of Byumba, Rutare, Mutete, Nyinawimana, Muvumba, Ngarama, Mutara, etc., and in Bugesera, such as Nyamata, Ntarama, Ruhuha, Kayumba, Rebero, Nyiramatuntu, CND, Gashora, etc.

3.2. The Genocide against the Tutsi as a commercial exploitation

Immediately after the genocide, Reyntjens rushed to Rwanda. He stayed there for five days in October 1994. As evidenced by the nature of his immediate and later publications, he was not interested in the factual reality, but rather in collecting any material that could incriminate the RPF. Thus, once back in Belgium, he quickly and harshly accused Rwanda without regard for the pressing factual realities[198]. This set the tone for what would characterize his line of conduct, as reflected in his statements and publications.

This distorted view of the facts would become the relentless leitmotif of every public appearance by Reyntjens: "The second cause is the "genocide credit," which the regime exploits to the fullest. The genocide has become a source of legitimacy that allows it to escape condemnation for its own actions. For the RPF, it is an

[197]What are the sources and how credible are they?

[198]Reyntjens F., *"Sujets d'inquiétude au Rwanda »*, Dialogue N°178, novembre – décembre 1994

ideological weapon enabling it to acquire and maintain the status of victim, and thus to benefit from impunity"[199].

In 1995, Reyntjens co-authored, together with the Belgian missionary Serge Desouter, a denialist document for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), aiming to influence the tribunal. The authors' intent is evident in their presumptive judgments against the Rwandan government: "For the current regime in Kigali, the genocide against the Tutsi has become a political asset used to have the international community accept its own violations of humanitarian law and to legitimize dictatorial governance"[200].

Like Reyntjens, the White Father Serge Desouter speaks on a subject he does not know. He left Rwanda in 1986 and never returned. Yet, like Reyntjens, he is one of the 'experts' used by several Western agencies in their handling of the Great Lakes situation!

3.3. Rejection of the planning of the Genocide against the Tutsi

On May 3, 2007, Filip Reyntjens testified before the Brussels Assize Court in the trial of Major Bernard Ntuyahaga, prosecuted for the murder of 10 Belgian UN peacekeepers in Rwanda in April 1994. Reyntjens denied the planning of the Genocide against the Tutsi, stating: "By definition, we will not have proof of planning because there are no minutes of meetings or, to date, convincing testimonies from people who would have been part of a parallel command structure." Yet, Reyntjens had been one of the first to reveal, two years before the genocide, that in Rwanda there was a group of death squads at the highest levels of the state preparing and committing massacres! He wrote this in a document dated October 9, 1992, providing details on the modus operandi of this

[199]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.117

[200]S. Desouter, Reyntjens F., *« Les violations des droits de l'homme par le FPR/APR.* Plaidoyer pour une enquête approfondie », Anvers, juin 1995, p.4

genocidal circle within the Rwandan government:

"Following a Belgian mission carried out in Rwanda (in September 1992), composed, besides the author of this testimony, of Willy KUYPERS (Senator), Johan SCHEERS (Lawyer from Brussels), Rik de GENDT (Journalist), and Wilfried VAN den STORME (Honorary Consul of Rwanda in Antwerp). (...) The information we have on the existence, composition, and activities of a 'réseau zéro' is based on the testimonies of two people who were associated with this group, the testimonies of three other individuals, including two senior officers who are well-informed about this group, and testimonies from the Bugesera region in particular (...)

The objectives of the group responsible for the disturbances were announced to new recruits as follows: "Multipartyism is the cause of anarchy and disorder; the Nsanzimana and Nsengiyaremye governments are worthless; therefore the ongoing change must be discredited."

At the national level, the core of this group consisted notably of the following individuals:

Nzirorera Joseph (former minister, deputy of Ruhengeri),
Zigiranyirazo Protais (former prefect of Ruhengeli, brother-in-law of the President),
Rwabukumba Séraphin (CEO of the Centrale, brother-in-law of the President),
Col. Serubuga Laurent (former Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army),
Col. Sagatwa Elie (Private Secretary to the President, brother-in-law of the President),
Mr. Ntirivamunda Alphonse (Director General of Bridges and Roads, son-in-law of the President),
Capt. Simbikangwa Pascal (official at the Presidency, brother-in-law of Col. Sagatwa),
Col. Bagosora (Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Defense, cousin of the President),
Maj. Nkundiye (Commander of the Presidential Guard),
and Col. Nsengiyumva Anatole (Head of Military Intelligence).

Beyond the central core, the group had local or regional operatives responsible for execution on the ground; in Bugesera, this role was notably carried out by Fidèle RWAMBUKA, the burgomaster of Kanzenze. The activities of this group had a triple effect: sabotage of the democratization process, which cannot proceed properly in a context of destabilization; intimidation of the Tutsi component of the population and of opposition parties; and obstruction of the Arusha process, since the message was clearly that neither refugees nor RPF members would be safe if they decided to return to Rwanda. These actions were therefore profoundly anti-democratic and violative of human rights; at worst, they could result in a fully orchestrated civil war... To shed the fullest possible light on these events and prevent their recurrence, a thorough international investigation is imperative".

The question of the death squads that prepared the Genocide against the Tutsi was posed to Reyntjens at the ICTR on September 16, 2004, when he was testifying in favor of Théoneste Bagosora. Embarrassed, his laconic response was a defense of this criminal circle: "Being a member of the Akazu[201] is not an offense or a crime before this tribunal." How can membership in the Akazu not constitute a crime when this very circle had been created by the regime for criminal purposes, which Reyntjens himself was among the first to reveal in September 1992? It is curious.

As additional information, it should be recalled that on September 21, 1992, the Rwandan army published a document identifying the enemy, automatically designating every Tutsi as an enemy of Rwanda.

[201] Akazu is a Rwandan term referring to a small extremist clique surrounding President Habyarimana's regime, which was involved in committing crimes against political opponents and Tutsi, and in preparing the genocide against the Tutsi.

3.4. The Tutsi, "Authors of Their Own Genocide"

At the ICTR, Reyntjens repeatedly and vigorously attempted to convince the judges that the war started by the RPF was the direct cause of the genocide. He insisted that the RPF was responsible for the genocide that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of families of RPF members living in Rwanda.

On 14 October 1997, Reyntjens appeared before the ICTR as an expert witness for the prosecution in the case of Georges Rutaganda, second vice-president of the Interahamwe militia at the national level. Reyntjens used his position to deny the intentional nature of the genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group: 'If there had been no war, there would have been no genocide,' adding that the RPF was 'politically co-responsible' for the genocide.

On 25 July 2005, in an interview with the newspaper POLITICS, Reyntjens violently accused the Rwandan Head of State of being responsible for a genocide that he was fighting, stigmatizing him by saying that the genocide meant nothing to him: "Kagame deliberately developed a strategy of tension; it was he who set the Hutu extremists on the path to genocide. The extermination of the Tutsi living in Rwanda was for him merely a tactical calculation to enable him to seize power. Confirmation of this hypothesis would make the RPF and its leader legally responsible for the 1994 genocide".

He repeated this absurd thesis in many of his publications and public statements: "When one of the judges asked whether there would have been genocide if there had been no war, my answer was that, in my opinion, there would have been no genocide without the war, and that in this sense the RPF was politically co-responsible for the genocide. I emphasized that this joint responsibility is political or historical, not legal. I maintain this point of view"[202].

[202]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.115

3.5. The Tutsi, inciters of the Hutu

The accusation that the Tutsi provoked the Hutu in order to incite them to commit massacres, suggesting that the Hutu carried out the genocide in "self-defense", is another recurring leitmotif in Filip Reyntjens' discourse. In June 1997, the Flemish magazine Wereldwild brought together three participants: Filip Reyntjens, Father Guy Theunis, and Colette Braeckman to discuss Rwanda. The remarks made by Reyntjens and Theunis were filled with extreme hostility, portraying the Tutsi as the primary provocateurs against supposedly peaceful Hutu. Let us revisit some of the questions and answers from this interview:

"**Question:** In 1959, during the Hutu Social Revolution, did the Church betray the Tutsi?"
Braeckman: "It was perceived as a betrayal. The Church changed course; it gave priority to the claims of the Hutu. This, moreover, corresponded to the political agenda of the colonial power, against which the Tutsi were rising up".
Reyntjens: "We should not present the Tutsi only as victims. One of the reasons for the revolution was precisely the inflexibility of a very small class of Tutsi, not the Tutsi in general. There were Tutsi who wanted democratization. (...) The Tutsi suffered violence, they were exiled. But they were not only victims. They pursued a policy of resistance to change".
Theunis: "It is a constant. The Hutu are generally peaceful. They wanted a non-violent evolution. Violence always comes from the same side. From only one side".
Question: What does that mean?
Theunis: On the side of the Tutsi. It is always the Tutsi who provoke, who in one way or another spoil things.
Question: In recent months, there has been talk of a new dictatorship in Kigali. Some speak of persecution of the Church?

Reyntjens: I do not mince my words. The Kigali regime is a brutal military dictatorship. I understand that there may be reasons for this. Rwanda is in a total deadlock. This deadlock produces so much violence that there is no longer any way out.

This excerpt shows how Reyntjens and Father Theunis employ language filled with hatred, racism, discrimination, and denialism[203]. This interview, conducted by Belgian journalists Guy Goris and Marc Van Laere, was translated into French and English and published by francophone and anglophone newspapers such as African News Bulletin/Bulletin d'informations africaines, owned by the White Fathers. They, in turn, disseminated it through all the information networks at their disposal around the world, in Belgium, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, the United States, and in numerous countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America where they maintain missions.

3.6. Clarifications from the ICTR on the lack of a causal link between the War and the Genocide.

From its first judgment rendered on September 2, 1998, against Jean-Paul Akayesu, the ICTR settled any confusion regarding the existence of a causal link between the war and the genocide, demonstrating that the Genocide against the Tutsi is a specific crime: "It is clear that the massacres that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 targeted a specific objective: that of exterminating the Tutsi, chosen specifically because of their membership in the Tutsi ethnic group (...) It is a genocide that was committed in Rwanda in 1994, against the Tutsi as a group".

The ICTR went on to note a clear distinction between the armed conflict between the RPF and the FAR on one hand, and the planning and execution of the genocide on the other":

[203]Only Colette Braeckman expressed balanced views.

Parallel to the conflict, a genocide against the Tutsi group was indeed carried out (...) the execution of this genocide may have been facilitated by the conflict, in the sense that the fighting against the RPF forces was used as a pretext for propaganda inciting the genocide against the Tutsi, conflating RPF combatants with Tutsi civilians, reinforced by the widely disseminated media idea that every Tutsi was a collaborator of the Inkotanyi. (...) It is important to emphasize that the genocide against the Tutsi, although it occurred concurrently with the aforementioned conflict, is obviously fundamentally different in nature from that conflict"[204]. In 2006, the ICTR established in the Karemera case that the genocide committed against the Tutsi was a matter of public knowledge that was not subject to dispute: "The genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda is a matter of public knowledge that is part of world history. There is no reasonable basis for anyone to deny that in 1994 there was a campaign of mass killings aimed at destroying, in whole or in large part, the Tutsi population of Rwanda. Although the exact number cannot be known, the vast majority of Tutsis in Rwanda were murdered, and many others were raped or otherwise abused. These facts were widely known even at the time the tribunal was established (in November 1994), as reflected in the (UN) Security Council resolution establishing the tribunal".

3.7. The Security Council demands the suppression of genocide denial and the FDLR

The UN Security Council has recognized the danger of genocide denial and the importance of protecting the memory of the genocide against the Tutsi, and has adopted a strong resolution to this effect. On 16 April 2014, the Security Council, in its Resolution 2150, reaffirmed the well-known nature of the genocide committed against the Tutsi, deploring the extent of genocide denial and the impunity of the perpetrators of the genocide,

[204]ICTR, The Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu

and calling on Member States to act in favour of memory and justice, including through the arrest and prosecution of the FDLR.

Quotes: '(...) There is overwhelming evidence that acts of genocide were committed against the Tutsi group' (...); Recalling that the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has made a judicial finding that it is 'a matter of common knowledge' that 'between 6 April and 17 July 1994, genocide was committed in Rwanda against the Tutsi ethnic group', Recalling also that more than one million people were killed in this genocide, (...) and noting with concern any form of denial of this genocide;

Stresses the importance of learning the lessons of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda; Condemns unequivocally any denial of this genocide and urges Member States to establish educational programs to ensure that the lessons of the genocide are passed on to future generations, with a view to preventing future genocides;

Welcomes the efforts made by Member States to investigate and prosecute all persons accused of this genocide; Calls upon all States (...) to investigate the facts and to arrest, prosecute or extradite, in accordance with their international obligations in this regard, all other fugitives accused of genocide who are residing in their territory, including the leaders of the FDLR. These decisions have the force of res judicata. This is the only truth that must be remembered, but Reyntjens continues to falsify it whenever he feels like it.

IV. Reyntjens and the use of international justice

Filip Reyntjens' relationship with international justice, whether it be the ICTR or the trials and prosecutions of perpetrators of genocide in third countries, has been marked by a glaring lack of neutrality and impartiality on his part. He has devoted too much energy to combating the uniqueness of the Tutsi genocide, relentlessly seeking to bring RPF members to justice for unproven crimes, defending the perpetrators of the genocide by providing them with aid and assistance, and frequently attempting to influence national and international justice. Let us examine this.

4.1. A lack of neutrality

Reyntjens' bias in judicial matters has been evident on several occasions. First, in Belgium, before the Brussels Assize Court; in Switzerland, before the Lausanne Military Court, in the case of Fulgence Niyonteze, mayor of Mushubati, who was tried and convicted by the Swiss courts; in the case of Léon Mugesera, in Canada, before the arbitrator Mr Turmel, who was to decide on Mugesera's extradition to Rwanda; testimony by affidavit in the United States and the United Kingdom in the defence of four genocide perpetrators (Dr Vincent Bajinya, Pierre Célestin Mutabaruka, Emmanuel Nteziryayo, Charles Munyaneza and Célestin Ugirashebuja), and in the Enock Ruhigira case in New Zealand.

When Canada decided on Léon Mugesera, Reyntjens was furious: "(...) When, in 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada authorised his deportation, I drafted a sworn statement in which I asserted that his return to Rwanda would not be justified, as he would risk an unfair trial, persecution and even death"[205].

[205] Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.97

Léon Mugesera received a fair and equitable trial before the Rwandan courts, he is being held in conditions that comply with international standards, and above all, he has not been executed, as Reyntjens claimed".

Reyntjens also acted as an expert and report writer for parliamentary commissions of inquiry in Belgium and France, for the United Nations commission headed by Mr Ingvar Carlsson, and for the panel of eminent persons set up by the Organization of African Unity, chaired by the former President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire. In all his interventions within these institutions, Reyntjens' concern has always been to influence them, unsuccessfully, on two points: the establishment of double genocide and the indictment of the RPF.

4.2. Pressure on the ICTR to acquit those accused of genocide

Reyntjens proudly admits that he often tried to influence judicial and political decisions in a way that suited him or protected his Rwandan friends, regardless of whether they were perpetrators of genocide: 'Like others, I have sometimes deliberately chosen to try to influence the course of events, which is inherent in the approach I have called "militant" or "activist". This voluntarism has a price that must be accepted. (...) Even when one does not choose activism, one is therefore involved in political practices'[206]. Indeed, on 30 November 1999, Reyntjens was heard at his request at the ICTR in the trial of militia leader Georges Rutaganda as amicus curiae (friend of the court). Reyntjens had introduced himself and begged the judges not to convict Rutaganda: 'I am concerned about the appearance that could be created if, in the circumstances of the moment, the Tribunal were to deliver a guilty verdict and determine a sentence in the Rutaganda case'[207].

[206]Les risques du métier, p.125

[207]Hirondelle, 30 novembre 1999, "Un expert recommande au TPIR de surseoir au jugement Rutaganda. »

On 22 November 2007, Filip Reyntjens returned to Arusha with the same mission to intervene on behalf of the former mayor of Ngoma (Butare), Joseph Kanyabashi. Despite overwhelming evidence of his responsibility for the massacre of Tutsis in his commune, Reyntjens, who had been friends with Kanyabashi for several years, pleaded innocence without concern for the search for truth[208]: "There is no evidence that Kanyabashi approved of the massacres of Tutsis. (...) Kanyabashi could not be linked to the planning of the genocide in Rwanda and in Butare in particular. (...) Given the situation as it developed in Butare, from 19 April (1994) at the latest, and the reality of physical control in the commune (Ngoma), it would have been impossible for Kanyabashi to effectively and visibly oppose the forces engaged in the genocide. Not only did he lack the physical means to do so, but he would have paid with his life for any attempt to do so[209]. Kanyabashi was ultimately found guilty of genocide and sentenced in the first instance to 35 years' imprisonment, reduced on appeal to 20 years for the crime of incitement to genocide.

4.3. Collaboration with Judge Bruguière in France

Reyntjens' actions, which ran counter to the search for the truth, were also evident in his close collaboration with French investigating judge Jean Louis Bruguière, who was conducting a biased investigation against RPF leaders. Reyntjens explains it this way: "At his request, I met Judge Jean-Louis Bruguière in Paris on 13 October 2000, two and a half years after the opening of the judicial investigation into the attack on the Rwandan presidential plane. (...) We reviewed the information I had gathered for a book I wrote in 1995 and the information I had received since its publication.

[208] See in particular the publication by the International Federation for Human Rights, Aucun témoin ne doit survivre (No Witness Must Be Left to Tell the Story), 1999, which details the course of the genocide in the Butare prefecture.

[209] Reyntjens, testimony before the ICTR in the trial of Joseph Kanyabashi, 18 September 2007.

Although he did not rule anything out, like me, he clearly leaned towards the RPF as the perpetrator of the attack.

I was not formally interviewed until 10 July 2002 in Brussels, during a rogatory commission led by Commander Pierre Payebien. Subsequently, I remained in regular contact with the investigation through him. We exchanged telephone calls and emails about questions he had, information he wanted to verify and elements that I thought might be useful to the investigation. A recurring theme was the safety of witnesses, especially those living in Rwanda; on one occasion, the exfiltration of a close associate of Kagame was seriously considered, but in the end the operation did not take place (...) As I became increasingly convinced that the RPF had carried out the attack, I thought to myself that it would naturally have obtained the missiles from its Ugandan ally[210].

As we can see, Reyntjens is not acting in the interests of impartial justice; like Bruguière, he is taking a unilateral approach, collecting only evidence against the RPF, a partisan choice far removed from the integrity of a scientific expert.

4.4. Opposition to international arrest warrants issued by Rwanda

Reyntjens' bias can be seen in another case concerning arrest warrants issued by the Rwandan judiciary against genocide suspects residing in third countries. While acknowledging the validity of certain cases in terms of their criminal content, Reyntjens defends the accused without limit or discernment. He writes: "The Rwandan regime wants to "recover" as many refugees as possible and has begun issuing arrest warrants around the world. While some of these warrants undoubtedly relate to individuals who can legitimately be suspected of involvement in the genocide, others are being harassed because they are (potential) opponents that Kigali wants to bring back under its control.

[210]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.97-98

I am therefore called upon to testify, in writing or in person, in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and New Zealand. In a number of cases, I know that Rwanda's request is unjustified, but even where I have no opinion on the guilt or innocence of the person sought, my position is that extradition is not justified because the person concerned risks an unfair trial and it is up to the host country to try him or her".

In other words, Reyntjens opposes the international arrest warrants issued by Rwanda on the purely theoretical basis that the accused will not receive a fair trial in Rwanda. However, several accused persons have been extradited to Rwanda by the ICTR[211] and by Western states[212], and all have received fair and equitable trials in Rwanda. There are even often agreements signed between Rwanda and the extraditing states, which Rwanda scrupulously respects. For example, in the case of Wenceslas Twagirayezu, who was extradited by Denmark, the agreement stipulated that if he was convicted, he would return to Denmark to serve his sentence. Rwanda complied with this provision in June 2015 and sent Wenceslas Twagirayezu back to Denmark to serve the remainder of his 20-year prison sentence. He was found guilty of crimes committed in the parish of Busasamana and at the Adventist University in Mudende.

4.5. Support for dignitaries seeking political asylum

Reyntjens takes his bias even further by praising the way he helps Rwandans, including genocide suspects, obtain political asylum in Europe: "I must mention two other consequences of the genocide that concern me.

[211]The ICTR extradited to Rwanda Jean Uwinkindi, Bernard Munyagishari, Ladislas Ntaganzwa, and Fulgence Kayishema (awaiting extradition from South Africa).

[212]The United States (several individuals), the Netherlands (Venant Rutunga, Jean Baptiste Mugimba, Jean Bosco Iyakaremye), Germany (Straton Musoni), Belgium (Major Bernard Ntuyahaga), Denmark, Sweden, and Canada.

The first relates to the fate abroad of this new diaspora, the vast majority of whom are Hutu. It has taken up a lot of my time. The first is that of Rwandans seeking exile in a wide variety of countries, whose lawyers ask me for sworn statements (affidavits) affirming that these asylum seekers are at risk of persecution for political and/or ethnic reasons in Rwanda. I have made dozens of them, always in good conscience (...), and I must say that, at least in the cases I am familiar with, the countries of asylum have generally shown hospitality and/or caution"[213].

4.6. Attacks against Westerners who defend the truth about the genocide

In his arrogance, believing himself to be the sole 'expert' on Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, Reyntjens displays intellectual intolerance towards academics and intellectuals who do not subscribe to his theories. He describes it as follows: "Those who – out of ignorance, calculation or sympathy – blindly support the Rwandan regime bear a very heavy responsibility. It is indeed this support that reinforces the RPF's conviction that it can do anything it wants, which in turn creates conditions conducive to the commission of new crimes and leads to a situation where future violence becomes inevitable. I find this support sometimes quite close to home. For example, two successive Belgian ambassadors to Kigali, Michel Lastchenko and Marc Gedopt, behave, according to all those who meet them, like "honorary members of the RPF". Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, who was deeply affected by his work as rapporteur for the Belgian Senate's Rwanda Commission, refuses to voice any criticism of the Rwandan government; since 2003, the same has been true of Louis Michel, Minister of Foreign Affairs and then European Commissioner"[214].

[213]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.95-96
[214]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.118

Even Belgian academics who refuse to subscribe to Reyntjens' theses, marked by hatred and denial of the genocide, are demonized by him: "At my own university, one of my colleagues in the Faculty of Law (whose name I prefer not to mention, but who will recognize himself) seizes every opportunity to support the Kigali regime (...). Another colleague at my university acts as a spokesperson for the RPF's theories and engages in brutal polemics both in the Flemish press and in a scientific journal. There are many other examples in Belgium and elsewhere. Those who act in this way are just as responsible as those whom they rightly criticize for having supported the regime that led to the genocide"[215]. Reyntjens is one of those people who strongly supported the Habyarimana regime, which was responsible for the genocide, as we have amply demonstrated. He should tackle the others, starting with himself.

Recently, Reyntjens attacked the French ambassador to Rwanda, Mr Antoine Anfré, who, at the end of his term of office, posted a farewell tweet on 13 August 2025 in which he expressed his memories: "This is my last post as French ambassador to Rwanda: "I am leaving Kigali after four wonderful years of service, which have helped to strengthen the friendship between France and Rwanda." Reyntjens responded with a shameful value judgement, saying: "Ambassador Anfré has represented Rwanda better than France!" Where is the scientific expertise in such an accusation? Where is the intellectual ethics?

4.7. Opposition to the prosecution of genocide perpetrator Froduald Karamira

Froduald Karamira was one of the extremist leaders of the MDR political party. Karamira was one of the masterminds and organizers of the genocide. He is particularly known for having called, on 23 October 1993, during a meeting of the MDR, MRND and CDR political parties, for Hutu unity in order to exterminate the Tutsi.

[215]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.119

Exiled in India, he was put on an Ethiopian airliner in 1996 at Rwanda's request and attempted to escape during a stopover in Addis Ababa. He was immediately recaptured and imprisoned for a time. Negotiations then began. On the one hand, the ICTR wanted to try him, and on the other, Rwanda was rightly demanding his extradition, and it was here that Reyntjens intervened strongly to prevent him from being brought to justice.

This is how Reyntjens explains his interventions on Karamira's behalf: "Froduald Karamira settled in India after the RPF victory. (...) After being deported to Rwanda, he attempted to escape during a stopover in Addis Ababa, but was quickly caught and imprisoned in the Ethiopian capital. Alerted by his brother, who lives in Nairobi, I contacted Catherine Cissé, a close associate of Goldstone[216] and his successors; Until she left the prosecutor's office, this charming and competent Franco-Senegalese woman was my constant point of contact. I wanted to prevent Karamira from being extradited to Rwanda (...). At the same time, I contacted a Belgian lawyer, Mr. Scheers, who agreed to defend Karamira's interests in his dealings with the ICTR"[217].

In seeking to shield Karamira from justice, Reyntjens was aware of his key role in the planning and execution of the genocide. Let us hear from him once again: "I believe I was only able to save one family "from a distance", in particularly difficult circumstances. On 15 April [1994], M.T., the wife of a Tutsi colleague, a former dean of the Faculty of Law, called me to say that her husband had been killed by militiamen with whom he was guarding a barrier in their neighbourhood of Nyamirambo. RTLM had denounced him, revealing his whereabouts and calling for his murder. When she told me that she had just buried him in the garden, I didn't know what to say to her and asked her what she was going to do. She replied very calmly that she and her children were waiting to be killed at any moment. When I asked her, 'Who controls the

[216]Richard Goldstone was the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

[217]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.89

militiamen who killed your husband?', she replied with a touch of cynical irony, 'Your friend Karamira'.

(...) I asked M.T. if I could call Karamira to try to get his protection, knowing that this was not without risk, as it would draw attention to the family. She tells me that everyone knows where they are and that they are going to die anyway. I call Karamira immediately. I tell him that his men killed M.T.'s husband, that this is unacceptable, but that the damage has been done. However, her family is alive and must remain so. I tell Karamira that I hold him responsible for the fate of these people and that if anything happens to them, I will hunt him down wherever he is to make him answer for this crime. Karamira is very embarrassed; he grumbles a little, claims that he does not control all the checkpoints in Kigali, but ends up giving me a vague promise. M.T. and the children were saved and were able to settle in Switzerland. I am not sure if my intervention had anything to do with it, but if so, this episode clearly shows the extent to which men like Karamira had the power to decide life and death during that period".

There should be no doubt whatsoever about Karamira's criminal power and his key role in the genocide. He was part of a deeply extremist circle which, throughout the genocide, used the national radio and RTLM to incite people to accelerate the genocide.

4.8. Rejection of investigations by competent experts into the attack on the Falcon 50

Since 1994, Filip Reyntjens has developed a theory that the missiles that shot down the presidential Falcon 50 aircraft on the evening of 6 April 1994 were fired from Masaka, specifically from a place called CEBOL[218] and that the RPF was responsible for the attack. From the outset, Reyntjens' position has been to

[218]CEBOL stands for Centre d'élevage pour bovins laitiers (Center for Dairy Cattle Breeding), which was located in the Masaka Valley. This research center was managed by the Kigali-East Project under the Ministry of Agriculture and was funded by France. Many of its collaborators were French engineers and technical assistants.

find every possible way and means to accuse the RPF[219]. He was not interested in the truth of the matter. Reyntjens fabricated this theory without ever having conducted any investigation in the field, let alone having any of the scientific competence and expertise required to examine plane crashes or accidents. Therefore, as soon as scientific expertise pointed in a direction contrary to his accusatory fabrications, he cried conspiracy.

In 2008, an expert investigation was conducted in Rwanda by British specialists from Cranfield University, which identified the Kanombe military camp and its immediate surroundings as the launch site of the SAM16 missiles that shot down the Falcon 50. Reyntjens denounced this scientific report, despite having no expertise in the field.

Meanwhile, in France in 2007, Judge Marc Trévidic had taken over Bruguière's case and this time conducted a genuine investigation to establish the facts. In 2010, French judges Marc Trévidic and Nathalie Poux made their first real judicial breakthrough by visiting the scene of the crime. The two judges travelled to Rwanda with a group of experts in ballistics, acoustics and explosives and carried out meticulous cartographic surveys. Their report, made public by Judge Trévidic on 10 January 2012, established two key points. First, the aircraft was hit by two SAM-6 missiles, which caused it to explode. Second, the missiles were fired from the Kanombe military camp, a stronghold of the official army, President Habyarimana's presidential guard and elite commandos.

Caught off guard, Reyntjens lost his arguments on his Masaka thesis and opted for an evasion that he still maintains, saying that the French experts did not identify the perpetrator of the shooting. Very curious, isn't it! Who else could have fired the shots if not the Rwandan army, which was responsible for this military camp,

[219]Reyntjens F., "Retour sur l'attentat de Kigali, l'étincelle qui a allumé le feu du génocide" ("Looking Back at the Kigali Attack, the Spark That Ignited the Genocide"), Institute of Development Policy, University of Antwerp, September 2020. He regularly defends this same thesis on social media.

the most important in Rwanda at the time? Let us remember that the Kanombe camp housed elite units including Major Aloys Ntabakuze's para-commando battalion, elements of Major Protais Mpiranya's presidential guard, the Anti-Aircraft Unit led by Colonel Bagosora and under the command of Colonel Laurent Serubuga, Major Augustin Ntibihora's military buildings battalion, and many others.

Following this investigation, on 26 December 2018, the investigating judges dismissed the case, which was upheld on appeal in August 2020 and then definitively validated on 15 February 2022 by the French Court of Cassation, thus putting an end to speculation about the RPF's responsibility in this case. However, Reyntjens does not accept the conclusions of the investigations as any serious expert would. He continues to insist on accusing the RPF of being responsible without any evidence. It should also be noted that in the years following Bruguière's arrest warrants, several of his key witnesses recanted their testimony, while others were contradicted. Piece by piece, Judge Bruguière's case fell apart.

Returning to Reyntjens, what is even more bizarre is that on 10 December 1998, he wrote to French MP Bernard Cazeneuve, rapporteur for the French Parliamentary Information Mission on Rwanda, in a letter in which he acknowledged that British and Belgian sources had confirmed to him that the former Rwandan armed forces had SA-16 missiles that were used to shoot down Habyarimana's Falcon 50.

Read: "In response to your letter of 3 December [1998], I can confirm that I have obtained the serial numbers of the SA-16 launchers from the FAR, and more specifically from Colonel Bagosora. Thisinformation wasprovidedtomebyhis lawyer, Mr Luc De Temmerman. I would like to take this opportunity to confirm in writing what I told you during our last meeting in Brussels, namely that my former British and Belgian sources have confirmed (my British source adds "adamantly") that, according to their information, these missiles are part of a stockpile seized by France in Iraq."

4.9. Use of perpetrators of genocide to accuse the RPF

Reyntjens' relentless pursuit of the RPF by any means necessary is well documented. This is evidenced by a letter he sent on 9 May 1997 to Hassan Ngeze, editor of the genocidal newspaper Kangura. In it, Reyntjens asks Ngeze for his full cooperation in accusing the RPF of responsibility for the attack on President Habyarimana's plane. Read:

"Dear Mr Ngeze,

Your letter dated 18 February, accompanied by the text intended for African Rights, only reached me a few days ago. This explains the delay in my reply. I have tried several times to contact you. Please find enclosed three letters that I have tried in vain to send you over the last few months. I kindly ask you to try to answer the question I am submitting to you. It would indeed be crucial to be able to prove the RPF's involvement in the attack on President Habyarimana's plane. If there are RTLM employees in Nairobi, perhaps you could check with them to see if an answer to my question can be found. Furthermore, I am of course willing to meet with a journalist from Kangura. Simply contact me a few weeks in advance to arrange an appointment.

I look forward to hearing from you or meeting you soon, Mr Ngeze.

Yours sincerely,

4.10. Reyntjens knew about Ngeze's criminal nature

Reyntjens contacted Hassan Ngeze to accuse the RPF while being fully aware of this individual's genocidal nature. Reyntjens had already described Hassan Ngeze's role in the massacres of Tutsis in Bugesera. Let us read: 'In March 1992,' writes Reyntjens, "Interahamwe and soldiers from the Presidential Guard and Camp Mayuya (a total of about 75 soldiers) were sent to Bugesera. The soldiers were in civilian clothes and armed with knives

and pistols. Those who could have hindered the operation, in particular officers from the Public Prosecutor's Office and inspectors/officers from the Judicial Police, had been transferred beforehand. The troublemakers were transported in Public Works vehicles; the petrol needed for the operation was provided by MM. Rwabukumba and Nzirorera and was reportedly transported by Hassan Ngeze and stored at Mayor Rwambuka's house.

Upon their initial arrival in Gashora, the Interahamwe and soldiers, aided by local Interahamwe, mingled with the population. They then attacked a few pre-determined targets: Tutsi families or those belonging to the opposition; from there, the violence spread. The complicity of certain services is obvious (...) It is also worth noting the central role played by the Public Works Department; not only did it provide vehicles and petrol vouchers, but the Road Fund served as a veritable slush fund for financing a number of illegal activities. (...) The troublemakers enjoy protection from high places. Hassan Ngeze, the editor of the extremist newspaper Kangura, who played a role in the events in Bugesera, comes to visit me at my hotel"[220].

In short, Hassan Ngeze, whom Professor Reyntjens contacted at the end of the genocide to encourage him to collaborate with him in bringing charges against the RPF, is a notorious criminal whose involvement in the preparation and execution of the genocide has been well known to him since 1990.

[220] Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.59-63

V. Challenging preventive measures aimed at peace

After the genocide, Reyntjens was active in opposing the establishment of a genocide prevention system and its ideology.

5.1. Opposition to the repression of genocide ideology

In 2001 and again in 2008, the Rwandan legislature adopted laws making acts of genocide ideology, divisionism and negationism punishable offences. Reyntjens was quick to denounce them as 'political laws,[221]' without regard for the scale and severity of the violence that was rampant in Rwanda, particularly the murders of genocide survivors. For example, in 2006, the Rwandan Senate published an eloquent report demonstrating that the ideology of genocide was a recurring problem despite the government's obvious efforts to eradicate it.

Similarly, in December 2007, a parliamentary commission set up to investigate the ideology of genocide in schools found that 26 out of 32 secondary schools were undermined by this crime. Following this finding, Law No. 47/2001 of 18 December 2001 on the punishment of crimes of discrimination and sectarianism, as well as Law No. 33 Bis of 6 September 2003 punishing the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were reviewed and amended by Law No. 18/2008 of 23 July 2008 on the punishment of genocide ideology and related offences.

In attacking the Rwandan law on the punishment of genocide ideology, Reyntjens was repeating the content of the communiqué by Ingabire Victoire Umuhoza, who had criticized the law, claiming that it was "deliberately vague, gave unlimited discretionary power to the Public Prosecutor's Office and paved the way for witch hunts and false accusations motivated by political considerations".

[221] Reyntjens F., *Reaction on Rwandanet@yahoo groups*, June 3, 2010; see also Reyntjens F., *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs*, Annuaire 2007–2008.

These attacks are unfounded. In fact, several European states also punish genocide ideology, particularly Holocaust denial, and no one, including Filip Reyntjens, denies the validity of such laws. For example, on 19 April 2007, one year before the enactment of the Rwandan law on genocide ideology, the European Parliament adopted a framework decision requiring states to legislate against racism in general, including Holocaust denial. This decision provides that acts relating to "public advocacy, denial or gross trivialization of the crimes defined in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg annexed to the London Agreement of 8 August 1945, directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, color, religion, ancestry or national or ethnic origin, where the behavior is carried out in a manner likely to incite violence or hatred against a group or a member of such a group".

In application of such texts, states such as Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Luxembourg, Andorra and others have laws criminalizing Holocaust denial.

One might therefore wonder why Filip Reyntjens would want Rwanda, the country that suffered the last genocide of the 20th century, not to do the same in preventing and punishing the ideology of hatred that led to the genocide.

5.2. Entrapment in ethnicity

Since 1994, Filip Reyntjens has published an annual work, often entitled 'The Great Lakes Region of Africa in Crisis', which frequently includes a list of Rwandan leaders and officials with their ethnic labels. One of the main questions is where Reyntjens bases his designation of the ethnicity of Rwandans today, given that since July 1994, Rwanda has removed ethnic references from its citizens' identity documents. Reyntjens' relentless focus on ethnicity reflects the ethnic nostalgia that this 'researcher-actor' carries in his memoirs and commitments, which are more political than academic.

If I compare this with France, where I did my university studies, when a French government is formed, it never occurs to anyone to scrutinize the list to count the number of Corsicans, Bretons, Burgundians, Catalans, Alsatians or Parisians who are part of it! Even in Belgium, despite the persistent differences between Walloons and Flemings, no such counting exists.

One wonders why Filip Reyntjens does not abandon ethnic counting in Rwanda, if not for his stubborn determination to perpetuate the colonial mindset that, in the eyes of many Belgians, in Rwanda you are either Hutu or Tutsi, just as in Belgium you are Walloon or Flemish! However, this is not the case, or rather it was not the case before the arrival of Belgian missionaries and colonizers in Rwanda.

We often forget or ignore how a Rwandan became Hutu or Tutsi according to totally arbitrary criteria based on the size or number of cattle. The most absurd case is that of being born to a Hutu or Tutsi father. For example, a Tutsi brother and sister with the same father and mother who married a Hutu girl and a Hutu boy, respectively, would have children who were not of the same ethnicity! The brother married to a Hutu girl would have Tutsi children, and his sister married to a Hutu husband would have children of Hutu ethnicity! Thus, first cousins did not belong to the same ethnic group!

During the genocide, it often happened that uncles or aunts, cousins or second cousins killed the children of their families who did not have an ethnic identity classified as Hutu. This colonial policy caused too much damage in Rwanda, and that is what the RPF banned. Failing to understand the validity of such a measure for the unity of Rwandans and perpetuating this practice, as Filip Reyntjens does, is a destructive maneuver that must be combated.

5.3. Animosity towards the Rwandan Head of State

Reyntjens' hatred for the Rwandan Head of State runs so deep that he writes that he even travelled to Kampala to convince

Ugandan officials to cooperate with him in this hatred. Here are his revelations: "In November 2000, I took a chance and contacted the aide-de-camp of a Ugandan general. To convince him to cooperate, I sent him the following message: While it is perfectly legitimate for Uganda to help an ally, particularly by supplying weapons and ammunition, the situation becomes different if that ally, without your knowledge, uses those weapons to shoot down a presidential plane. Here you have a golden opportunity to deal with Kagame without exposing yourselves"[222]. That says it all!

Another example occurred on 7 February 2008 in Brussels, where a so-called 'hot' conference was held on the arrest warrants issued by Spanish judge Fernando Andreu Merelles against forty senior Rwandan officials[223], led by Spanish denialist lawyer Jordi Palou Loverdos, a close associate of Reytjens[224]. Reyntjens describes his collaboration with Mr Loverdos as follows: 'I must point out (...) that I had frequent exchanges with Jordi Palau Loverdos, lawyer for the civil parties'[225].

Taking the floor, Reyntjens used language insulting to the Rwandan Head of State as follows: 'What should be the position of a partner country of Rwanda that has to shake hands with President Kagame? (...) I am tempted to say: Kagame and the forty thieves!'

Full rhetoric against the Rwandan Head of State, going so far as to declare that his anti-Rwanda stance is motivated by jealousy of the success and international recognition he has achieved. Read: "When I realize that the RPF has committed and continues to commit the worst crimes, the only choice available is that of activism (...). This activism is not inspired solely by a sense of justice for the victims, but also by the revolting ease with which the RPF manages to secure total impunity. Worse still, a deeply criminal

[222]Reyntens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.99

[223]The Spanish judiciary ultimately dropped these warrants, recognizing their political rather than legal nature.

[224]

[225]Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.97

regime is presented as a model for Africa, Kagame is received everywhere with full honors, he is awarded honorary doctorates, distinctions and prizes, he is applauded at the many conferences he gives around the world, and Rwanda is becoming a place where the world's political, media and even business leaders are queuing up at the gate. Tony Blair has become Kagame's "unpaid" advisor. I have explained why this imposture has become possible, but it shocks me deeply"[226].

It is clear that jealousy is hurting Reyntjens, who swore in 1994 that the RPF regime would not stand the test of time. Seeing the opposite happen, Rwanda's successes hurt him as a former adviser to President Habyarimana, and instead of acknowledging his mistakes, he goes so far as to deny Rwanda's obvious progress in good governance: "It is not only the RPF's criminal past that is driving me to campaign. According to all the information I receive from Rwanda, including from the most remote hills, the lamentable political governance is a source of great structural violence, which we know will eventually lead to acute violence. So, I have the same feeling of apprehension that I had before 1994. The exclusion and marginalization of the majority of the population – and I am not just thinking of the Hutu[227] – create and fuel frustration, resentment and hatred. The development that foreigners see is mainly concentrated in Kigali, the regime's showcase[228]. The disconnect with the rest of the country is enormous, and inequality, calculated on the basis of the Gini coefficient, has doubled since the RPF came to power. Despite appearances of security, cleanliness and "progress", Rwanda is therefore a volcano waiting to erupt"[229].

[226] Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p.120-121

[227] How does Reyntjens identify Hutu and Tutsi in today's Rwanda? That remains a mystery!

[228] Let us recall that Filip Reyntjens, who writes these falsehoods, last visited Rwanda over thirty-one years ago, specifically, for a five-day stay in October 1994.

[229] Reyntjens F., *Les risques du métier*, p. 121

In September 2025, when the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs cancelled Reyntjens' conference in Antwerp, instead of seeing the reasons for this in Belgium and learning from them, it chose to sanctify and appease the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs: 'I have respect for Minister Prévot, for his positions on Rwanda and for his role in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I think he was badly advised'[230].

Then, once again, he attacks the Rwandan Head of State, who has no business interfering in a strictly internal Belgian matter: 'The decision contradicts the independence of the Institute,' Reyntjens wrote in X. 'It will not result in Paul Kagame's respect, but rather his contempt, and will reinforce Kagame's conviction that he can punch above his weight'.

5.4. Virulence against Rwandan officials

These days, Reyntjens' daily posts on social media consist of attacks, insults, lies, slander and diatribes of all kinds against the Rwandan government as a whole. Personally, I am one of the executives he attacks at will, along with my colleague Olivier Nduhungirehe. He does not accuse us of any criminal acts but attacks us solely for doing our job. An example:

In February 2025, I participated in a conference in Nyagatare organized for young people in the Eastern Province on the unity of Rwandans in preparation for the 31st commemoration of the genocide. The next day, The New Times newspaper published a photo on its front page showing me with the young people. Reyntjens posted this photo, comparing me to the genocidaire Léon Mugesera. As a reminder, Léon Mugesera, who was a political advisor to the presidential party MRND, went to Kabaya in the Ngororero District on 22 November 1992, where he gave

[230]La Libre Belgique, 10 September 2025. Reyntjens does not want to upset Prévot, given that in Belgium he has often relied on him to draft diplomatic notes accusing Rwanda and requesting sanctions in various international forums. Reyntjens does not want to lose this standing.

a public speech directly inciting the extermination of the Tutsi. And today, the so-called 'expert' "Filip Reyntjens compares a Rwandan official who gives a speech to young people to honor memory, build national unity, reconciliation and resilience to a criminal like Mugesera? To make matters worse, Reyntjens makes such accusations without ever having listened to my speech and without ever understanding Kinyarwanda, the language used in this conference!

5.5. Reasons for Reyntjens' hostility towards the RPF

The relevant question that needs to be asked is what the origin of Reyntjens' undisguised and unrelenting hatred is. Servilien Sebasoni's analysis provides an illuminating answer that I find convincing: "When the Rwandan Patriotic Front appeared on the horizon,' Sebasoni points out, there was a brief attempt at mutual seduction. It soon became clear that the RPF was resistant to any foreign intellectual influence, especially from the former colonial power. There was never any cordiality between Filip Reyntjens and the RPF. The RPF's patriotism sought to rebuild the new Rwandan society on its secular cultural foundations, including national unity above "ethnicity". This was a casus bello between the RPF and Filip Reyntjens.

The important thing for Rwandans was not to deny Filip Reyntjens intellectual leadership of their country. It was urgent to remove a man who promoted an ethnicism that had divided Rwandans and led them to genocide. And if Rwanda decided at one point to no longer grant a visa to Filip Reyntjens, it was because you do not invite a leper when leprosy has just taken away members of your family. Filip Reyntjens developed a lasting grudge. From then on, he devoted all his considerable resources and tireless determination to undermining the new Rwanda.[231]"

[231] Servilien Sebasoni, *Le Rwanda: Reconstruire une nation*, 2007

VI. The Internationally Contested Status of Reyntjens as an Expert

Several international institutions, States[232] and Reyntjens' academic colleagues have rejected his status as an expert, denouncing his lack of integrity.

6.1. Before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

The debate over Reyntjens' status as an expert resurfaced on several occasions. Appearing as a "defense expert" in the Butare trial, Reyntjens faced objections from the lawyers of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and her son Arsène Ntahobari, who were co-accused alongside Joseph Kanyabashi. The discussions focused on Reyntjens' actual qualifications and cast doubt on his true knowledge of Rwanda during and after the genocide.

The defense, represented by Counsel Marquis, presented a series of highly relevant arguments rejecting Filip Reyntjens' status as an expert on Rwanda:

"The role of an expert witness is to inform the Judges on specific matters of a technical nature that require particular knowledge in a defined field. From the five subjects on which Counsel Marchand wishes the witness to be declared an expert, it is clear that these fall within specific areas of expertise. Reyntjens does not meet the criteria for these particular fields. To be an expert in Rwandan history, there is an underlying concept: one must be a historian.

I can accept that Mr. Reyntjens may be an expert in law. (...) As for the governmental measures of Rwanda, I respectfully submit that it is unclear what that actually means in practice. It clearly falls outside a defined area of expertise, such as medicine, law, political science, or others. Therefore, I find it difficult to accept this qualification, which seems to me to encompass far too much.

232

As for the three other aspects: contemporary history of Rwanda, investigations, and historical analyses, including the events of 1994, he himself stated in his report and during his testimony that, regarding the facts, he relied on Ms. Des Forges. I find it difficult to understand how someone can claim to be an expert in these two fields. How can one assert expertise while relying on someone else's book? I therefore formally object.

As for the final aspect, human rights and personal rights, among others, in Rwanda, the problem arises when one adds "including investigations and analyses in this field." The witness himself states that he conducted no investigations regarding the events at issue here, in Butare, and particularly when he says "including the human rights situation in Rwanda before, during, and after the events of 1994." I respectfully submit that this is insufficient to qualify someone as an expert. I see nothing in Mr. Reyntjens' testimony that demonstrates technical knowledge on specific issues... no specialized knowledge. He does not possess such specific knowledge. Consequently, in my opinion, Mr. Reyntjens has only met the criteria for being considered an expert regarding law and human rights. However, with respect to Butare, I submit that he does not have sufficient knowledge to merit qualification as an expert in this specific field"[233].

It should be noted that Reyntjens, during his opening statement, explained his status as an expert, which was hardly convincing. He first indicated that he was a professor of African law and that he had gradually shifted toward the fields of politics and development: "I am currently a professor of African law and politics in Antwerp, and I am President of the Institute of Development... the Institute of Political and Development Management... Institute of Policy and Development Management."

[233]ICTR, Case No. ICTR-98-42-T, Trial Chamber II, 18 September 2007, The Prosecutor v. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, Arsène Shalom Ntahobali, Sylvain Nsabimana, Alphonse Nteziryayo, Joseph Kanyabashi, and Elie Ndayambaje.

The first issue that arises in this case is that African law, as such, does not exist. In Africa, there is no singular "African law" equivalent to European law as embodied by the institutions of the European Union.

Regarding his publications, which would purportedly justify his scientific expertise on Rwanda, Reyntjens stated: "I cultivate a fairly broad field. I have published on Rwandan law, on the human rights situation in Rwanda, on elections, recent history, political developments between the 1980s and the period immediately preceding the genocide, and on Rwanda and other countries in the region within the framework of Great Lakes regional geopolitics." Overall, the status of an expert requires high standards of scientific rigor, including profound knowledge of the subject matter, field experience based on precise facts that the expert has personally observed, verified, confronted, and analyzed, leading to conclusions that are methodologically sound and substantively reliable. This is not the case for Reyntjens with respect to his writings on Rwanda since 1994".

6.2. Objections from renowned academics and observers

In 1991, the Belgian daily La Libre Belgique noted regarding Filip Reyntjens that "his pro-Hutu revolution opinions are well known"[234]. Currently, it is historians and political specialists who have expressed their views on him. Thus, on September 25, 2017, following the publication of an issue of the journal QUE SAIS-JE? authored by Reyntjens through the French University Press, which distorted the historical facts constituting the genocide against the Tutsi, a collective of 90 primarily European figures, including numerous historians, published an opinion piece in Le Monde newspaper in which they demonstrated Filip Reyntjens' bad faith and unscientific approach.

[234]La Libre Belgique, 26 novembre 1991

They noted the following: They noted: "One can only welcome the fact that this highly politically sensitive subject, due to the role played by the French State in Rwanda, is the object of an accessible synthesis. Yet, while it pretends to be scientific objectivity, this work is entirely a political polemic: the text as a whole seems driven by a single purpose: to denounce the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)".

Numerous similar critiques followed, suggesting a challenge to both the author and his publisher. Yet, in 2021, they released a second edition in which the same errors were deliberately repeated. Libération, on September 21, 2021, published an article on this edition with a telling headline: "Genocide of the Tutsi: a 'Que Sais-Je?' that knows very little." The authors directed their criticism at both the writer and the publisher:

"We can only be astonished that a publisher, whose aim is to make knowledge accessible to all, could have ignored the warnings of recognized historians and participated, for a second time, in disseminating theses that deny fundamental elements of the genocide against the Tutsi. In doing so, the Humensis publishing group (owner of PUF) has not only contributed to the popularization of historically obsolete theses but has also lent credibility to an author defending revisionist arguments about the last genocide of the 20th century"[235].

The authors describe Reyntjens as a Holocaust denier, backing up their claim with objective reasons: "Engaged in a media war against the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) since 1990, to the detriment of the objectivity of his work, Filip Reyntjens repeats the repugnant theories attributing responsibility for the genocide of the Tutsis to the RPF, which, as early as October 1990, "could not have been unaware [...] that the attack would seriously endanger

[235]Among the authors of this section are renowned historians such as Professor Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, Research Director at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris; Dr. Hélène Dumas, EHESS; Dr. Annette Becker, Professor of History at the University of Paris Nanterre; Dr. Juliette Bour, EHESS; and others.

the Tutsis inside the country", thereby placing part of the blame for the genocide on the victims themselves".

The authors continue their solid argument: "Taking up one of the favourite arguments of the perpetrators of the genocide, Filip Reyntjens denies that the genocide against the Tutsis was planned in advance, arguing that it was the result of an unplanned process, triggered by the assassination of President Habyarimana and facilitated by the fear of Tutsis that existed among the population. This denial of the planning of the genocide, supported in a dubious manner by limited and selective sources, is all the more surprising given that Filip Reyntjens himself stated in 1995, under oath before the Belgian courts: 'However, I know from numerous reliable testimonies that a plan for genocide and political massacres had been in place for a long time, with the first signs already visible at the end of 1991".

CONCLUSION

In a country like Rwanda, which has experienced genocide, and given the persistence of genocidal ideology in neighboring countries, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is essential to prioritize, as Rwanda has done since the end of the genocide, a national identity that transcends ethnic identity. It is this choice alone that builds peace, not the opposite. The unity of Rwandans is historical, despite the genocide. Indeed, the unity of Rwandans and their national consciousness is documented in all the writings of the earliest explorers and missionaries.

The Rwandans' relationship to ethnicity was a colonial construct, which requires, for the consolidation of Rwanda's unity, a return to customary and historical values that strengthen it. It is the choice of unity that has allowed Rwanda to be rebuilt, and this approach is applicable to the three countries of the Great Lakes sub-region, still affected by remnants of the criminal ideology similar to that which caused and enabled the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994.

Any "expert" who does not align with the goal of consolidating national unity, but instead promotes division, hatred, and historical distortion, poses a danger to Rwanda and the entire Great Lakes region.

This is the case with Filip Reyntjens.

THROUGH BOOKS AND JOURNALS

Over the past two years, 2024–2025, several important books have been published on the Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi, confirming that this crime and its consequences will remain a permanent historical reality. A notable development has been the publication of two significant works by two nuns from the Congregation of the Benebikira Sisters, Sr. Marie Josée Mukabayire and Sr. Anna Béata Murekatete. Through their writings, they recount their experiences of the genocide and provide the public with previously unheard testimonies from within religious congregations.

"Lessons from the Genocide against the Tutsi: Resilience and Forgiveness", a book by Sr. Marie Josée Mukabayire.

This book was released in 2024 and was publicly presented on January 3, 2024, at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Gisozi, in the presence of the author. The work recounts Sr. Josée's experience during the genocide, when she was in charge of the Cyanika Health Center in Nyamagabe District. It narrates her escape, the extermination of her family, the courage of her religious congregation, the Benebikira Sisters, and her later departure abroad—first to Europe, then to the United States, and finally to Ghana.

The inspiration to make public the reality of the genocide proved essential, especially with the support of her American and Ghanaian fellow sisters, who showed her remarkable sympathy and encouragement to put her experiences into writing. Through this testimony, she seeks to contribute to memory, personal and collective healing, and ultimately to the hope of a peaceful Rwanda. This work also stands in contrast to a series of denialist books and writings produced by certain Rwandan clergy and missionaries that have multiplied since the end of the genocide in July 1994.

Some Rwandan priests, such as Venuste Linguyeneza, Fortunatus Rudakemwa, Juvénal Rutumbu, Simon Habyarimana, among others, as well as missionaries including the White Fathers Serge Desouter, Guy Theunis, Hans Zoller, and others along with the uncompromising Archbishop André Perraudin have distinguished themselves by publishing writings widely condemned for genocide denial.

That a humble Benebikira sister, Sr. Josée Mukabayire, should come forward to correct these distortions is deeply encouraging. English-speaking readers will find this important book well worth reading.

"The Genocide Committed against the Tutsi in Rwanda: The Contribution of the Benebikira Sisters to the Protection of Victims and the Reconstruction of the Country", by Sr. Anne Béata Murekatete.

Sr. Anne Béata Murekatete served as the Superior General of the Benebikira Sisters. Her book is particularly significant as it is the first work on the Genocide against the Tutsi written by a nun of such senior rank. The book recounts the actions of the Benebikira Sisters throughout the country during the genocide. It highlights the remarkable courage shown by many of them in their efforts to save lives. In some cases, militias killed them together with the Tutsi they were protecting, as happened at the parish of Simbi, where two Hutu Benebikira sisters were massacred alongside Tutsi who had taken refuge within the parish compound.

In Save, the central headquarters of the Benebikira congregation, the sisters both Hutu and Tutsi remained united. They sheltered hundreds of Tutsi refugees and succeeded in saving more than 270 Tutsi within the convent at Save, an act of extraordinary courage amid the horrors of the genocide.

The foreword to this book was written by Antoine Mugesera, Vice-President of DIALOGUE. He summarizes its message in these words: "Within this congregation, no one deserted, no one handed over a sister who was being hunted, and no one abandoned the

Tutsi who had sought refuge in the institutions or health centers they managed. No one sold their soul to the devil. All the sisters remained together, and at least eighteen of them paid for it with their lives".

As it is not possible to review all the books published over the past two years, we provide below a (non-exhaustive) list to guide DIALOGUE readers toward these works.

Some recommended books published on the genocide of the Tutsi between 2024 and 2025

- Nsengimana, Albert. *My mother killed me: Surviving the Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda.* Hugo & Compagnie, 2024.
- Akariza, Annely Laurette. *Rebounce: Transgenerational resilience in Rwanda - Resilience from ashes.* Inzozi Publisher, 2024.
- Hagenimana, Antoine. *The Grief of My Mother: A Treasure Hidden Under the Mountain - The Suffering and Resilience of a Child Survivor of the Genocide against the Tutsi.* iBABA, 2024.
- Iradukunda, Bruno. *My forgiveness story: A genocide Survivor's Story of Forgiveness & The In-Depth Study of the Theme.* Vital Readings Publishers, 2024.
- Le Scornet, Daniel. *Comprendre le Mécanisme Génocidaire.* Douce, 2025.
- Uwase, Dominique Alonga. *30 Years, 30 Stories: The light of hope will always shine.* Imagine We Rwanda, 2025.
- Dushimimana, Emmanuel. *My father's mysterious glasses.* Ingenzi Book Publisher, 2025.
- Nzamwita, Eric. *Gukurira mu gicucu cy'urupfu.* Pallotti-Presse, 2025.
- Mukurarinda, Gustave Mukunde. *The Snowfall: One Boy's Account of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi.* Palmetto Publishing, 2025.

- Uwababyeyi, Honorine. *Diamonds in a Dustbin.* G&I Publishers, 2024.
- Hedden, Immaculée. *Munsi y'Ukuboko Kwayo Gukomeye.* Lulu publishing www.lulu.com, 2024.
- Ngabonziza, Jean Baptiste. *Munyaga mu icuraburindi: Amateka ya Jenoside yakorewe Abatutsi ku misozi ya Nkungu na Munyaga.* Besta Publishers, 2024.
- Nsanzabaganwa, Jean D'Amour. *Ntiryari iherezo: Amasomo twigiye mu bihe bigoye twaciyemo.* Tantum Publishers part of Tantum Group ltd, 2025.
- Umulinga, Josiane. *Survived to forgive, never again to genocide: Rwanda 1994.* John Mukora, 2024.
- Kayitesi, Judence. *The Unity Quest. tredition GmbH*, 2025,
- Murangwayire, Liliane. *Surviving the Unthinkable.* Inzozi Publisher, 2025.
- Sr. Mukabayire, Marie Josée, *Lessons from the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Resilience and Forgiveness.* Digibooks Ghana.Ltd, 2025.
- Kayitaba, Michel. *Agakiza gashyizwe mu ngiro: Umuti w'urwango n'isoko y'imbaraga zo kurwanya akarengane na jenoside.* Rwanda Editing and Literature Organization (RELO), 2024.
- Mutangana, Steven. *Rwanda: Imbabazi iwabo w'Abene-Imana.* Indoha Pub- lishing House, 2024.

- Sr Murekatete, Marie Anna Beatha. *Le Génocide commis contre les Tutsi Au Rwanda: Contribution des Benebikira à la protection des victimes et à la reconstruction du pays.* SMC Ltd, 2025.

- Umubyeyi Béata Mairesses, EJO, livre disponible en français et en kinyarwanda. Elle est l'auteure d'autres ouvrages trouvables sur Amazon.fr comme *Après le progrès, La Cheminante, 2019*; *Tous tes enfants dispersés, Autrement, France, 2019*; and the English version, *All your children scattered*, Europa Editions, 2022 (US), 2023 (UK); *Culbuter le malheur, Mémoire d'encrier, 2024* ; *Le convoi, Flammarion, 2024* ; English translation : *The convoy, Open Borders Press,* Orenda Books, 2025.

- François Xavier Nsanzuwera, *Briseurs de destin : les cerveaux du génocide des Tutsi,* Presses Universitaires St Louis, 2024.

- Henri Rousso et alii, *Le choc. Rwanda 1994 : le génocide des Tutsi,* 7 mars 2024

- Jean Pierre Chrétien, *Combattre un génocide : un historien face à l'extermi- nation des Tutsi du Rwanda (1990-2024)*, 5 avril 2024

- Jean Marie Vianney Rurangwa, *le génocide perpétré contre les Tutsi du Rwanda expliqué à ses enfants,* Kindle Editions, 2025

- Maria Malagardis, *Avant la nuit, Talent Editions, 2025; Rwanda: Vers l'apocalypse,* film documentaire, 7 avril 2025

- Antoine Mugesera, série d'ouvrages d'anthologie aux Editions IZUBA:
  - Rwanda 1896-1959 : *La désintégration d'une nation* (anthologie Vol.1)
  - Rwanda 1959 – 1962 : *La révolution manquée* (Anthologie Vol. 2)
  - Rwanda 1980-2010 : *Regards sur le Rwanda en marche* (Anthologie, Vol.3)
  - Rwanda 2009 – 2012 : *Du génocide et des rescapés* (Anthologie, Vol.4).

- Numukobwa Assumpta, *L'université m'a trahie,* 2025.

- Ngarambe François Xavier, *Le génocide contre les Tutsi du Rwanda,* l'Harmattan, 2025.

- Jean-Pierre Peeters, *Rwanda, 30 ans après, encore et toujours,* les Lys Bleu, 2024.