

Kabuga Trial : Rights Activist testifies on role of RTLM in Genocide

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Human rights activist, Monique Mujawamariya, on Wednesday, testified before judges at the UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) about the role of Felicien Kabuga's extremist radio station during the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi.

Kabuga was the founder and chief financier of Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), an extremist radio that called on the public to hunt and kill Tutsis during the Genocide.

Kabuga is charged with genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, persecution on political grounds, extermination, and murder as crimes against humanity.

Mujawamariya appeared in court for her testimony as prosecution continued to present evidence pinning Kabuga on his role in the Genocide.

She disclosed that RTLM used to

project all Tutsi as enemies of the state as well as accusing Hutus who married the Tutsi, human rights activists, and opposition politicians of being accomplices of the Tutsi.

In her testimony, Mujawamariya told court that RTLM would announce the Tutsi they thought were still hiding and their specific areas of residence. This, according to the witness, would direct Interahamwe or Impuzamugambi to where the alleged enemies were and attack them.

She gave an example of a particular RTLM broadcast saying that in the Gitega neighborhood of Kigali, there was a place where "a group of Tutsi women" have "confused" Hutu men. According to her, the next morning the militia attacked the neighbourhood and killed one woman.

In addition, court heard that Interahamwe and other militia gangs used to move around with their radio receivers listening to RTLM while

singing about exterminating the enemies.

Mujawamariya also provided evidence to her accounts, citing the power of radio in Rwandan culture, which was traditionally known as the most trusted and consumed media.

She testified about her name being announced multiple times on the radio and the attacks as well as the harassment she experienced as a result.

The prosecutor told the court that on the morning of April 7 in 1994, armed men and soldiers stormed and broke into the witness's home and started shooting indiscriminately, but she was lucky to have escaped into hiding after hearing her name being mentioned on the radio shortly before the attack.

Later on April 12, she sneaked out of the country after the media declared her dead among others.

Responding to some of the prosecution's questions, she said that she doesn't remember well how many times her name was read out on RTLM.

Asked why she thinks she was the target, Mujawamariya explained that it was because she was a human rights activist who attracted much public attention resulting from several reports she published about human rights violations in the country and cases of harassment committed by the militia, the Interahamwe and presidential guards.

The witness was later cross examined by defence lawyer, Françoise Mathe.