

Opinions

Mail and Guardian: A newspaper that has sided with genocide perpetrators and hate ideologues

Gatete Nyiringabo Ruhumuliza

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South African freedom fighter Steve Biko once said, ‘The most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor, is the mind of the oppressed.’

Last week, the South African paper *Mail and Guardian* gave platform to known genocide revisionist Judi Rever and another man, who was unknown to me, one Benedict Moran to ‘reveal’, ‘exclusive top-secret testimonies’ implicating Rwanda’s president in war crimes’.

There was nothing “exclusive” or “recently leaked” in the M and G article, but a rehash of Judi Rever’s book which most of us didn’t read, and whose content she has been pushing on social media for months.

In a bizarre e-mail sent to the Rwandan presidency and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, Benedict Moran engaged in peculiar throwaway questions, asking the receivers to confirm his accusations directed at them.

Obviously no one responded, in fact, one commentator remarked that the letter looked like a parody note from the Onion! This is called the reverse of burden of proof, making claims then requesting for evidence. The alleged ‘recently leaked’ Moran claims are mere revisionist hearsay ginned up by lawyers of genocide perpetrators in the early 2000s which ICTR judges made a general ruling to squash

These lawyers worked with so-called investigators (for defence) who turned out be Genocide perpetrators that had schemmed their way to ICTR payroll. Some ended up being tried and convicted for genocide by the same tribunal.

These fabrications were further debunked by an inquiry of French judges, and announced witnesses have since retracted their fake testimonies.

When these allegations were first raised over twenty years ago, famous journalist Nick Gordon took a trip to the alleged 'crime scene' in Gabiro, where the RPF allegedly burned their Hutu victims. Gordon found, in his own words, "only three primitive army barracks, and nothing remotely resembling a death camp."

In an upcoming scientific rebuttal of Judy Rever's book, which I have seen, the author, a renowned academic explains how Judy Rever transposes Nazi practices during the holocaust to describe how the RPF may have disposed of bodies.

She remarks that Revers' accusations are far-fetched, because such cremation practices took the SS five years and a whole enterprise to set up and still death camps were discovered. It is impossible that the RPF could have killed people and make them vanish in a matter of days or months.

That genocide perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity in South African cities, 25 years after their crimes should be the subject of concern to every normal human being and any decent newspaper. That they find receptive audiences and platforms to justify their deeds, by accusing those who defeated them as well as their victims, defeat basic human decency. That a journalist in search for eccentricity, chooses to side with them, defeats the object and purpose of the once noble journalism profession.

Just to be clear, I do not debate with genocide revisionists. It is a principle I share with all colleagues, products of Rwanda's liberation. Across this article I will share previous publications where all these issues were canvassed here and here.

There is a fundamental problem, when a newspaper overlooks rulings from an international tribunal, ignores UN resolutions, world renowned historians and authors, and dismisses testimonies of genocide survivors, to vend conspiracy theories from self-proclaimed journalists with no affiliation to a known journal, quoting ghost witnesses and unsubstantiated 'secret' documents.

Just like hate media of the genocide era, South African media has a mixed past. During the apartheid, some journalists and newspapers sided with the apartheid regime, referring to Nelson Mandela and his ANC comrades as 'Terrorists', quoting dubious scholars to establish through 'research' the superiority of the white race, and misleading the world about what was happening in South Africa.

Alas Apartheid has ended legally in South Africa, but racism hasn't. The ghosts of hate still inhabit many, as a foreign student there I experienced it first-hand.

While it is illegal to peddle Apartheid-apologists in South Africa, it seems their racist media has found a new outlet : double genocide in Rwanda. Since the accession to power of the Rwandan Patriotic Front by putting an end to the genocide against the Tutsi, South African media has picked sides, not with the heroes or the survivors, but with the killers, publishing everyone who claims to have proof that Rwanda is an open prison.

Last year, when Rwanda Development Board (RDB) signed a deal with English club Arsenal to promote its tourism industry, M and G's Simon Alison wrote an impassioned fake news, quoting a vastly debunked Human Rights Watch report. Known here as 'The Walking Dead' report, in July 2017, just before Presidential elections in Rwanda, Human Rights Watch published a report with a list of persons alleged to have been 'summarily executed by Rwandan security forces' for petty crimes such as stealing goats, etc.

Seven persons reportedly executed in the HRW report, namely : Nsanza-bera Tharcisse, Majyambere Alphonse, Nyirabavakure Daphrose, Karasan-kima Jovan, Habyalimana Elias, Nzamwitakuze Donati and Hanyurwabake Emmanuel, appeared a few days later in a press conference; It was a MIRACLE!

Others had died of natural causes and their relatives threatened to sue Human Rights Watch for tarnishing their memory by accusing them of being petty thieves. We haven't heard of HRW ever since, but South African media has taken its place.

Alison's opinions were obviously ignored because Arsenal likely ignores his very existence, and in the same year, Kigali rose to second place in MICE business, almost catching up with Cape Town, and to quote RDB CEO, 'these people are either ill-informed or ill-intentioned, either way they are ill.

For many years South African media put pressure on South African Judges to declare the Rwandan government guilty in the death of late Rwandan spy, Patrick Karegeya, strangled in Johannesburg. For seven years they sustained the story in the media, quoting Rwandan terrorists on the run, quoting the wife, the children of the deceased, but most interestingly quoting the lawyers of the deceased and the prosecutor in the case and referring to them as 'the court'.

Not once did they name the allegations what they are : allegations, until

a South African judge, tired of the protracted circus, decided to strike the case from the court's role.

It is uncanny that allegations of RPF massacres do not mention the Chairman of the RPF, the several Commissioners of the movement and army commanders, who joined from the beginning and along the struggle. Indeed, only racists, with little or no knowledge of the history of Rwanda, can define the RPF as a Tutsi movement. 'Umuryango w'Abanyarwanda' as it is known was led by Tutsi, Hutu and Twa leaders.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire speaks of the danger of indoctrination and its alienating effect on peoples, especially in schools, in public opinion (meaning the media). The Brazilian author recommends as a remedy, an educational action aimed at promoting among indoctrinated peoples a clear awareness of their objective situation, that is to say, to equip them to regularly take the measure of the cultural, political and social issues of the contemporary world.

In Freire's spirit, allow me offer a free Rwandan history class, as a remedy to these people's alienation, if it is not too late... In 1959, it is not Tutsi who were chased, it is UNAR-ists, members of UNAR : 'Union National Rwandais'. Unarists were members of a party of nationalists who were fighting for two things :

- Immediate and unconditional independence of Rwanda from the Belgians ;
 - Maintenance of the monarchy in Rwanda.
- Unarists were Tutsi, Hutu and Twa.

The UNAR was led by Illustrious François Rukeba. A Hutu nationalist who believed in Rwandan ideals.

After he was chased with other UNARIST, late Rukeba Rwanda was stationed in Bujumbura, getting Rwandan refugees enrolled in school.

My Tonton, Faustin Kagame, an excellent Author in *Jeune Afrique*, was enrolled in collège by Rukeba. He also wrote several petitions to the UN Secretary General explaining he plight of the Tutsi.

I think it is even wrong to refer to him as a Hutu, I think his real title is Rukeba, an upright Rwandan, and I take this opportunity to salute his memory.

On the other side, there were APROSOMA : Association for the promotion of the masses and MDR-Parmehutu : As both designations indicate, these parties were almost exclusively made of Hutu extremists who were interested in getting rid of the Tutsi and were happy with the continuation of

colonialism – as posters below shows, they sided with the Belgians to chase the Tutsi. They were led by two known extremists and genocide ideologues : Gitera and Kayibanda.

From its inception, the RPF was not a Tutsi but a Rwandan movement made of Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. Only, it was fighting to allow Tutsi, alongside other exiled Rwandans to return home, and two of its eight-point program were and still remain : the Restauration of unity among Rwandans and Eliminating all causes of refugee status.

As the war progressed, the RPF constantly enrolled Hutu soldiers from Habyarimana's regime. The Rwandan Patriotic Army would capture them, educate them on the ideals of national unity, then enlist them into the liberation movement.

At no point in time, was the RPF exclusively Tutsi. In fact, I have never seen, heard or attended an RPF meeting which had one ethnic group only ; no one has, such gathering simply doesn't exist in Rwanda.

Like it's ancestor the UNAR, the RPF was also led by a Hutu, late Alexis Kanyarengwe, from the north of the country. I know he is Hutu because he was the highest ranked Lt. Colonel of the nine 'Camarades du 5 juillet' who assisted late president Juvenal Habyarimana to lead a military coup on the July 5th 1973, against Gregoire Kayibanda, another Hutu extremist and officially the first post-independence president of Rwanda.

Kanyarengwe later disagreed with Habyarimana which led to his fleeing to Kenya in December 1980.

When the RPF was being created, its leadership approached Colonel Kanyarengwe to become the Chairman of the liberation movement, and one of the first operations of the newly formed Rwandan Patriotic Army was to attack the Ruhengeri prison where Habyarimana locked away his political prisoners and free them all.

Among them were one Major Theoneste Lizinde, Commander Leonidas Biseruka, Muvunanyambo and others. These personalities were integrated in the high command of the RPA.

As soon as RPF took power, in reintegrated over 1,000 senior officers of the defeated regime with their ranks and appointed them as commanders of several brigades and other key positions.

No movement with genocidal goals does this, and it is inconceivable then, that these soldiers would have conspired to or participated in exterminating their own relatives.

I could go on about the edifying history of the liberation of Rwanda and

I will on other occasions, but here I would like to emphasize one point : the RPF-Inkotanyi is by essence 'Umuryango w'Abanyarwanda' : The Rwandan family – and that's its strength and the secret of its success.

Any initiative that attempt to stigmatize one or the other group of Rwandans is bound to fail, be it the Mail and Guardian in South Africa, the FDLR in Congo forests, or Jambo ASBL in Belgium, shall all be defeated.



The Camarades du 5 juillet. Lt. Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe is fourth from left.

editor@newtimesrwanda.com



1959, Members of APROSOMA and MDR-Parmehutu hold signs saying Independence isn't urgent, saying that getting rid of Tutsi is more urgent.