

What Nyamasheke elderly woman left for President Kagame in her will

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The Minister in the Office of the President, Judith Uwizeye, signs a document after receiving on behalf of President Kagame a will in which a 73-year old widow in Nyamasheke who died in May this year left him three pieces of land. Kagame has promised to use the land by setting up development activities that are beneficial to the community. / Photo : Courtesy.

In a remote village of Bushekeri, Nyamashake District, a small group of people mostly from the Association of Widows of the Genocide against the Tutsi (Avega Agahozo), gathered on Tuesday to fulfill a promise made by a genocide widow before dying.

The deceased genocide widow, Marianne Nyirangoragoza, succumbed to what close friends say was respiratory disease in May this year at Avega Agahozo-based estates. She died in May, 2020, aged 73.

During the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Nyirangoragoza had a husband and 10 children. She lost eight of them to the Interahamwe militia together with her husband.

Family members who are conversant with her story say the deceased then sought refuge at her nearest

family with her other two children, who were also killed by their cousins – children of her own sister.

Feeling lost and confused, Nyirangoragoza decided to part ways with her own family.

The Government, through the Fund for Assistance to Genocide Survivors (FARG), built her a house and supported her until the age of 70 when she was no longer able to stay alone.

“This is when she was relocated to Impinganzima in Rusizi District – Avega Agahozo estates from where other older genocide widows are sheltered,” Valérie Mukabayire, the President of Avega Agahozo, said.

Impinganzima are hostels for elderly Genocide survivors which have been built in different parts of the country by Imbutu Foundation – an initiative by First Lady Jeannette Kagame – in collaboration with different stakeholders.

The hostels are run by Avega Agahozo, an organisation that brings together widows of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

Before she passed on, however, the genocide widow left a will; and in that will, she bequeathed all she had been left with to President Paul Kagame.

“She gathered a few witnesses and a lawyer to sign a will stating clearly that all her belongings should be given to President Kagame,” one witness said on Tuesday.

According to the will, Nyirangoragoza possessed a piece of land and four fields with a combined total of 2,203 square metres spread on three plots.

Mukabayire, the president of Avega Agahozo handed the will and the respective land titles of the deceased to Judith Uwizeye, Minister in the Office of

the President during the function in Nyamasheke.

Why Kagame?

When Nyirangoragoza's children and her husband were killed during the Genocide, she fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo from where RPF-Inkotanyi rescued her and brought her alongside other refugees to the country.

Mukabayire who was also a witness said before she passed on, she called the people she was living with, especially members of Avega, and cautioned them against distributing her properties to any other person other than the President.

"In fact, she used a word, 'Kagame is smart' referring to his deeds and how his leadership enabled her to get a life that otherwise would have been given by her own children," she said.

According to Avega President, the deceased was clear about her will not being given to the Government rather to the President.

Léopold Kazubwenge, a former neighbour of Nyirangoragoza who also received a gift from the deceased, confirmed that the decision to leave her possessions to Kagame isn't a surprise.

"From long time ago, Nyirangoragoza insisted that she will leave all her estate to the leadership of this country led by President Kagame. This decision therefore doesn't surprise us," he narrated.

Another friend of the deceased, Françoise Kamugwera, also said that she was not surprised by Nyirangoragoza's choice of extending her will to Kagame, highlighting that she had ultimate love for the country's leadership.

The Minister from the President's Office revealed that the President accepted the will, saying he would implement a public interest project on the given pieces of land.

"We were all intrigued when we heard about this, but we were not surprised considering where these genocide widows came from," she said. "We also know that a will is a good tradition in Rwanda, and so President Kagame was amazed by the decision."

The Minister did not say what type of project that the President plans to pursue on the availed pieces of land.

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