

Rwandan scholar ‘shocked’ by links to Belgian probe team on colonial past

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The New Times, October 15, 2020

A Rwandan historian on Thursday, October 15, expressed shock after reading an article by a Belgian newspaper, alluding to a proposal to include him in a special parliamentary commission to probe the country’s colonial past in Rwanda.

Belgium at the beginning of August named a 10-person team to ascertain the European country’s past in Rwanda and the great lakes region.

In the region, Belgium colonized Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This particular commission has in the recent past raised eyebrows over the fact that Belgian authorities chose a denier of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi to be part of the team.

Laure Uwase, a member of Jambo Asbl, a Europe-based association known for trivializing and denying the 1994 Genocide, was appointed among the ten experts making up the

commission.

Now, an article by seasoned Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman published by the Belgian French-language newspaper *Le Soir*, says that a Rwandan history professor, Paul Rutayisire, was being proposed to join Uwase on the commission.

Contacted for comment, Rutayisire who is retired but is still often invited to teach the History of Rwanda (Catholic Church, colonial period and Genocide against the Tutsi) at the University of Rwanda, expressed shock at the reports.

"It is unbelievable! I am shocked by this (article in *Le Soir*). I was never contacted or even consulted, and I never asked for it," Rutayisire said.

A political commission

"I haven’t followed much into what this Parliamentary Commission

is all about but it appears as one intent on answering questions posed by Belgian citizens. And for me, my area and interest is Rwanda," he added, stressing that he has no interest in being dragged into what he considers to be political entanglements in Belgium.

"I cannot involve myself with Belgian politics. This is a political committee and I could be used as a tool."

The National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) describes Jambo Asbl as a genocide denying association founded by youth who do not recognize the role of their parents and grandparents in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Most young Rwandans who founded the association are descendants of masterminds of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

In a statement on August 10, the Rwandan parliament also condemned Uwase's appointment to the Belgian Commission.

Parliament noted that Uwase is a known genocide denier who belongs to an organization whose mission is the denial and the revision of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

"Her known expertise is the distortion of the recent history of Rwanda," reads part of the Parliament's statement.

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