

Rwanda ready to offer ‘any support’ in Kabuga trial - Busingye

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Rwanda is ready to offer any support to the UN court trying Genocide crimes and any other jurisdiction to ensure successful prosecution of Félicien Kabuga, who is currently in custody in France.

Speaking at a news conference on Wednesday, July 8, Justice Minister and Attorney General Johnston Busingye said that much as Kabuga is not subject to the Rwandan judiciary, Kigali is following closely on his case.

Alleged Genocide financier Kabuga was arrested on the morning of May 16 near the French capital of Paris, bringing to an end a 26-year manhunt for the fugitive.

He was arrested on the indictment of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) which took over from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Kabuga, a well-connected top businessman during the Juvenal Habya-

rimana regime, was a key member of the genocidal machinery, having been among the founders of a hate radio station that incited the killings and leading financier of massacres.

“The technical management of the Kabuga case remains within the ambit of the UN court and, on our part, all we have done is to avail ourselves for judicial cooperation to ensure successful prosecution of the suspect,” Busingye told journalists in Kigali on Wednesday.

French media last month reported that Aurélie Devos, the deputy prosecutor at the Paris High Court, will travel to Rwanda in a few weeks’ time to oversee a UN criminal investigation into Kabuga.

And, according to Busingye, Rwanda is open to cooperation with anyone, including the suspect’s lawyers in case they wish to travel to Rwanda for investigations, as long as they go through official channels.

A French court, the Paris Court of Appeal, on June 3, ruled that Kabuga be transferred from France to the custody of MICT for trial.

The ruling came after his request for bail was turned down by another French court on May 27.

Kabuga, aged about 85, who faces seven counts linked to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, had requested to be tried in France, arguing it would be easier for him to be accessed by his family.

However, a judge at the UN court in May ruled that Kabuga should be transferred to its detention facility in Arusha, Tanzania following a request by the UN prosecutor that he be temporarily transferred to The Hague due to the coronavirus travel restrictions.

“What is important for us is that judiciary caught up with Kabuga after all these years on the run. Of course, the case is of much interest for Rwanda, so we shall always monitor closely,” Busingye said.

‘Good signs’ on France

Meanwhile, Busingye said that there are good signs that fugitives in France would finally come to book, following the improvement in bilateral ties between Rwanda and France, and commitments from French authorities.

In a letter addressed to President Paul Kagame on the occasion of the 26th Liberation Anniversary last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said he was ready to work with Rwanda to bring to book Genocide fugitives living in the European country.

“Rest assured that we are continuing our efforts to ensure that all suspected Rwandan génocidaires are prosecuted,” Macron wrote.

Dozens of Genocide masterminds have found a safe haven in France, including 30 who are being pursued by France-based pressure group, Collectif des Parties Civiles pour le Rwanda (CPCR).

“Generally, from where we stand as the judiciary, there is indication that things are headed in the right direction, especially when there is political will from the very top and that is the French presidency,” Busingye said.

France has so far tried three cases related to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi but is yet to hear two high-profile cases referred there by ICTR.

In 2007, the ICTR referred the cases of Wenceslas Munyeshyaka, a Catholic priest, and Laurent Bucyibaruta, a former préfet (governor) of Gikongoro prefecture, to French judicial authorities – as part of its completion strategy.

However, 13 years down the road, none of the two fugitives has been

prosecuted and the latest that was heard of Munyeshyaka, who is suspected to have masterminded the killing of hundreds of people at Sainte-Famille Catholic Church in Kigali, was still an active cleric in France. fkimenyi@newtimesrwanda.com