

Opinion

France's highest tribute to Dafroza lies in ensuring genocidaires stand trial

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Dafroza Mukarumongi Gauthier, a campaigner for justice for victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, died on October 3 in France. Courtesy.

On October 7, 2026, France's National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor's Office (PNAT) honored Dafroza Mukarumongi Gauthier, a tireless advocate for justice who co-founded the Collectif des Parties Civiles pour le Rwanda (CPCR) to prosecute suspects of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. The CPCR's unwavering commitment to justice paved the way for 12 trials in France targeting those responsible for the genocide, resulting

in eight convictions.

Words alone cannot honor Dafroza. The true measure of France's tribute lies in the prosecution of genocide suspects currently living on French soil. This matter is urgent, since more of these suspects are dying before they can ever be held accountable for their crimes.

On October 4, 2026, Callixte Mbarushimana, a high-ranking FDLR figure, died in Paris while a reopened French judicial investigation into his case was underway. His death follows that of Félicien Kabuga, who died on May 16, 2026, and Laurent Bucyibaruta, who died in Saint-André-les-Vergers on December 6, 2023, taking his unexamined appeal with him.

During an April 23 commemoration hosted by the French Embassy in Kigali, France's national anti-terrorism prosecutor, Olivier Christen, said 36 Rwandan nationals are currently under investigation for suspected involvement in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

In a significant step for accountability, a French appeals court upheld the 27-year prison sentence of former Rwandan doctor Eugène Rwamucyo on July 18, 2026, affirming his conviction for complicity in the genocide. Another key trial is approaching as genocide suspect Safari Madjaliwa prepares to face the Paris Assize Court from November 17 to December 18.

These steps toward justice for genocide survivors are welcome, but they represent only a fraction of what is needed, given that more than 30 cases remain under investigation and awaiting trial in France. Each delay risks another suspect dying before facing a courtroom, as it has already happened repeatedly.

Rwanda's Ministry of Justice reported in June 2026 that of 1,199 arrest requests submitted to foreign countries for 1994 Genocide suspects, only 63 have faced court trials so far. Of those, 32 were extradited back to Rwanda, while 31 were tried in their host countries, which chose to exercise their own jurisdiction instead of extraditing them.

Notable fugitives in this group include former Rwandan army colonel Laurent Serubuga and Agathe Kanziga, widow of former Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana. French courts rejected Rwanda's extradition requests for Serubuga, allowing him to remain free in France after his 2013 arrest near Cambrai, France.

In August 2025, a French investigating judge dropped a 17-year inquiry into Agathe

Kanziga, who has lived in France since 1994, citing insufficient evidence of her involvement in the genocide. The French Court of Appeal ordered the investigation to resume on May 6, 2026, rejecting the lower judge's decision to suspend it.

IBUKA, the umbrella organization for survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, welcomed the French court's decision to reopen the investigation, stating that the date would go down in history and always be remembered by survivors.

Rwanda's issuance of nearly 1,200 international arrest requests over 30 years has produced just 63 prosecutions. This wide gap exposes serious limitations within global justice frameworks for prosecuting genocide suspects, and it shows how much work remains undone decades after the crimes were committed.

France must now back its words with real, sustained action. Prosecuting the remaining suspects is the only way to truly honor Dafroza's legacy.

By taking that action, France offers a roadmap for other nations, including Canada, Germany, Belgium, the Nordic countries, and several African states, seeking to bring genocide fugitives hiding within their own borders to justice.

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