

Rwanda: Simbikangwa to Appear Before French Court Over Genocide
By Jean De La Croix Tabaro, in The New Times
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Prosecution in France has obtained, from the Paris intermediate court, an order to file a case against Pascal Simbikangwa in criminal courts.

Simbikangwa is accused of complicity in genocide and crimes against humanity. According to media reports, prosecution in France accused him of having armed Interahamwe militia and ordered them to kill Tutsis, especially in the former Gisenyi prefecture in the north west of the country.

The investigation over the role Simbikangwa played during 1994 Genocide against Tutsi started in 2009, one year after he was arrested in Mayotte, a French island. Later on, he was transferred to a prison based in France Metropolitan.

A former army captain and member of the intelligence in the genocidal regime, also believed to be one of the 'Akazu extremist group', Simbikangwa would be the first Rwandan tried by French courts. According to French laws, Simbikangwa has ten days to appeal over this decision.

The move was welcomed by Genocide survivors.

Naftali Ahishakiye, the executive secretary of Ibuka, an umbrella of associations advocating for the survivors of the Genocide against Tutsis said, "It's a good move as we approach the Genocide commemoration. Let them also arrest the other suspects whom they protected for long."

Similar commendation was made by Jean de Dieu Mucyo, the executive secretary of National Commission against the Genocide, who said it was good news but France should stop pretending.

"France should really pursue Genocide suspects on their territory, all those we always call for arrest," he said yesterday.

France hosts several Genocide suspects who are believed to lead a tranquil life despite appeals to have them arrested and prosecuted.

Prominent among them is Agathe Habyarimana, the wife of the late president Juvenal Habyarimana. She is believed to have been chairing the Akazu, a small group of extremists who, through economic and political influence, were the core advisors for the Genocide machinery.

In December, last year, the French courts ruled that she would be given permanent residence in France.

Others include Laurent Bukibaruta, former prefect of Gikongoro prefecture.

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