

14 September 2006

## **Rwanda Accuses U.N. Court of Hiring War Criminals**

By Arthur Asiimwe

KIGALI — Rwanda on Thursday accused a U.N. court trying masterminds of the 1994 genocide of recruiting genocide suspects and said it would stop cooperating with the Tanzanian-based tribunal if it took no action.

Relations between Rwanda and the Arusha-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) have been strained over an incident earlier this month in which Tanzanian authorities arrested a Rwandan lawyer working for ICTR.

He was freed days later after ICTR expressed its concern.

"From October 2002 to date, the government has expressed deepest concerns over the increasing number of genocide suspects recruited to work with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda," a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

ICTR officials were not immediately available to respond.

Rwanda accused ICTR of intervening in the arrest of Callixte Gakwaya in early September by exerting pressure on Tanzanian authorities to release him. Gakwaya is accused by authorities in Kigali of taking part in the country's 1994 killings.

The court says Gakwaya has immunity while on official duty as a defence counsel, like any other ICTR employees, under an agreement signed between the United Nations and Tanzania when the court was set up in 1994.

ICTR appointed Gakwaya to represent former businessman Yusuf Munyakazi from Cyangugu in northern Rwanda.

Rwandan authorities say Gakwaya is wanted for genocide and his name appears on a list provided to Interpol.

Rwanda has pushed to arrest anyone suspected of involvement in the genocide that killed 800,000 people, and has sometimes run into conflict with the tribunal.

In 2005, Rwanda said it submitted a list of 13 genocide

suspects contracted by the ICTR but no action has ever been taken. ICTR has said it was never issued with a warrant for Gakwaya's arrest.

"The ICTR's consistent behaviour of disrespect to Rwanda's judicial institutions is well known to genocide suspects," the statement said. "This has turned the tribunal into a safe haven for genocide suspects."

Rwanda asked the court for an urgent meeting to resolve the problem, saying it would take "appropriate" measures.

In the past, Rwanda has blocked travel to Tanzania for witnesses needed to testify in the tribunal.

It is not the first time Rwandan authorities and tribunal officials have collided. Bitter relations emerged after the tribunal opened investigations into war crimes committed by present Rwandan army officers during the 1994 killings.

Since its inception, the tribunal has indicted more than 80 people for genocide-related crimes, convicted 26 and acquitted four. The ICTR is under pressure to finish its cases before the end of its mandate in 2008.

Copyright 2006  
Reuters