

4.2. Rwanda



Facts

- Capital: Kigali
- Area: 26,000 sq.km
- Population: 11,4 million
- Main ethnic groups: Hutus (84%), Tutsis (15%), Twadis (1%)
- Location: Central Africa
- Neighbours: Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi (see Figure 4).

Historical background

Until the 18th century, Rwanda was divided into smaller communities and inhabited by three groups – Tutsi cattle-breeders, Hutu farmers and Twadi hunter-gatherers. In the 18th century, power concentrated into the hands of a Tutsi ruler whose court, army and taxmen were known as Tutsis regardless of ethnic origin. Rwanda fell under German colonial rule in the 19th century (1884-1916), followed by Belgian rule (1916-1960). Inspired by the then popular ideas of racial purity, both colonial powers promoted the Tutsi rule and all the rich and “good-looking” members of the rwandan population were called Tutsis. A special „ethnic” ID-card system was adopted to distinguish between the „races”. During the democratic reforms of 1950s, both ethnic groups became politically organised and also formed their own militias: PARMEHUTU for Hutus and UNAR for Tutsis.

A Hutu rebellion and revolution took place in 1959 after an attempt on the life of the PARMEHUTU leader. In ensuing acts of vengeance, an unknown number of Tutsis (20,000-100,000 in different sources) were killed and about 150,000 fled to neighbouring countries.

Rwanda declared independence in 1962 and power was transferred to Hutus. A number of reforms contrary to human rights were carried out and both groups resorted to violence. Tutsis were marginalised in most spheres.

The eve of genocide

In 1990, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) of Tutsi rebels started a civil war, taking over the Rwandan regions bordering Uganda. However, neither side achieved clear success in the struggle and intermittent talks had by 1993 led to the Arusha peace accords. The treaty included provisions on creating a transitional government, uniting the armies of both sides and establishing the rule of law. Those accords never entered into force.

On 6. April 1994, unknown attackers shot down the plane of president Habyarimana and the incident was blamed on Tutsi rebels. This provided the pretext and instigation for genocide which began a few hours later.

Genocide

The genocide spread quickly, helped by long preparations and the previous founding of dedicated *Interahamwe* and *Imuzamugambi* militias. In addition to those groups, a large number of Hutu civilians took part in the killings after incitement in the mass media and especially radio.

800,000-1,000,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in 100 days and almost 2 million Rwandans (mostly Tutsis, but also Hutus) fled to neighbouring countries. The international reaction was modest and UN forces in Rwanda left soon after the killings began. The genocide ended on 18. July 1994 when the forces of Rwanda Patriotic Front entered Kigali.

Timeline of genocide (emphasis style 2)

- 1. April:** A plane carrying President Habyarimana and Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira is shot down over Kigali airport.
 - 2. April:** The killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus begins. UN forces refrain from intervention in order not to overstep their mandate. 10 Belgian peacekeepers are killed.
 - 3. April:** Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front launches a military campaign to stop the killings and save 600 soldiers stationed in Kigali under the Arusha accords.
- Middle of May:** The Red Cross puts the death toll at 500,000.
- 17. May:** UN adopts a resolution on sending an additional 5500 peacekeepers, also mentioning possible genocide.
 - 22. May:** Rwanda Patriotic Front takes control of Kigali airport and Kanombe barracks.



Bodies of Rwandan refugees wrapped in straw mats and blankets line the roadside.
Reynolds, R. 1994. Wikimedia Commons. Wikimedia Foundation.

- 22. June:** Debate on the peacekeeping mission continues. UN authorises 2500 French soldiers to launch Operation Turquoise to establish a safe area in the government-controlled part of Rwanda.
- 4. July:** Rwanda Patriotic Front takes control of Kigali and Butare. The leadership announces they are willing to form a government under the Arusha accords.
- 13.-14. July:** Refugees escaping the Rwanda Patriotic Front flood across the border to Zaire (DR Congo).
- 18. July:** Rwanda Patriotic Front declares an end to the war and nominates pastor Bizimungu as President and Faustin Twagiramungu as Prime Minister.

Why did the people go with ethnic hatred and violence?

- Artificial identity creation by colonial powers
- Socio-economic inequality and resulting class hatred
- Brainwashing through education and mass media
- Rumours and fear
- Ideas of vengeance and obligation towards community
- Legitimisation of ethnic violence by the state

After the genocide

After the genocide, pastor Bizimungu was nominated President and RPF leader Paul Kagame became Vice President and Minister of Defence, although he was the *de facto* head of state. Rwanda faced enormous problems from returning Tutsi refugees and 2 million revenge-fearing Hutus. The first municipal elections were held in 1999 and presidential elections in 2003.

The country is to date led by RPF leader Paul Kagame who has carried out a number of internationally acknowledged reforms but is also known to be authoritarian. Debates on ethnic issues are prohibited by Rwandan law.

In 1994, the *International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda* was founded in Arusha, Tanzania, by UN Security Council resolution No. 977. The tribunal investigated almost 50 cases and convicted 29 persons, including former Rwandan Interior Minister Jean Kambanda who pleaded guilty. Some cases are still on-going.

WANTED FOR GENOCIDE



FELICIEN KABUGA



AUGUSTIN BIZIMANA

**ARRESTED**

JEAN-BAPTISTE GATETE

**ARRESTED**

AUGUSTIN BIZIMUNGU

**ARRESTED**

THARCISSE RENZHO

**ARRESTED**

IDELPHONSE HATEGEKIMANA



AUGUSTIN NGIRABATWARE



IDELPHONSE NIZEYIMANA



PROTAIS MPIRANYA



CALLIXTE NZABONIMANA

YUSUF JOHN MUNYAKAZI, RYANDIKAYO, CHARLES SIKUBWABO, ALOYS NDIMBATI

INDICTED

Rewards of up to U.S. \$5,000,000 are offered for information that leads to the arrest of persons indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for serious violations of international humanitarian law and their transfer to Tribunal custody. If you have information about any of the above persons, please contact Rewards for Justice through the telephone number or email below.

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