

Handout 2: Case Backgrounds

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. This was opposed by the country's Serbs whose share in the population was around 40% and who had an autonomous Serb republic (*Republika Srpska*) within the newly independent state. Seeking to achieve an all-Serb population on its territory, the Serb army (VRS) began expelling and killing the non-Serb population. In three years, several hundred Bosniak villages were destroyed, more than 10,000 killed and almost 100,000 displaced. Bosniaks, most of whom were Muslim, sought refuge from the Serb army in the city of Srebrenica.

Although the UN had declared a safe area in Srebrenica and sent 400 peacekeepers to protect the civilian population there, VRS invaded the city in July 1995. In a thoroughly planned operation, Bosniak men were separated from the women and children and taken to various nearby villages where mass executions were carried out in the following days.

Rwanda

The small Republic of Rwanda (about twice smaller than Estonia by territory) is located in Central Africa. The country was ruled by a monarchy during the 15th-20th century. The ruling elite were called Tutsis and the poorer, mostly farmer population were known as Hutus. It has also been claimed that Tutsis and Hutus are of different geographical origin and somewhat different physical traits.

Oppressed Hutus began an uprising against the Tutsi monarchy in 1959. Hutus took power in the country and opposition parties were gradually removed from political competition. Many Tutsis fled the country during the revolution and the following years.

In 1990, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) of Tutsi exiles attacked Rwanda. A three-year civil war ended by an accord between RPF and MRND (Rwanda's military government) which created a multi-party system open for both Hutus and Tutsis.

MRND members were not satisfied with the outcome and started planning the extermination of Tutsi population. Weapons were distributed to Tutsi civilians and „enemy“ lists were prepared of persons to be executed, including Tutsis, Hutus who were opposed the military regime and the foreign spouses of Tutsi women. An anti-Tutsi media campaign was designed by MRND to fuel hostility against Tutsis. Its main instrument was the RTLM radio channel which urged people to exterminate „the enemy“ and broadcast the locations of Tutsi sanctuaries.

Around 800,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsis and liberal Hutus were murdered during the period of April-July 1994.