

<https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/rwanda/News/Genocide-fugitives-in-trouble-as-extradition-push-gains-speed-/1433218-1875316-13gh8rjz/index.html>

The East African

Arrest of 6 genocide suspects fuels calls for all fugitives to be sent to Rwanda for trial

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Buoyed by the arrest of five men in Britain and a sixth in Norway, Rwanda argues case to have them stand trial at home, calls for other countries to follow suit.

Summary

- Rwanda's efforts to pursue genocide fugitives from their safe havens the world over are beginning to pay off with European countries making fresh arrests.
- British police recently arrested five Rwandans suspected of participating in the 1994 genocide while Norway arrested a sixth man for similar reasons.

Genocide survivors are urging the British and other European governments to consider sending to Rwanda the genocide suspects whom they have arrested.

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British police recently arrested five Rwandans suspected of participating in the 1994 genocide while Norway arrested a sixth man for similar reasons.

Three former mayors of former communes in the Southern Province of the country are among the five men in custody in the UK. They are Charles Munyaneza of Kinyamakara, Emmanuel Nteziryayo (Mudasomwa) and Celestin Ugirashebuja (Kigoma).

Send them home

"Nineteen years later, we cannot afford to have some genocide suspects roaming free on European streets," said Dr Jean Pierre Dusingizemungu, president of the genocide survivors' umbrella, Ibuka. "We welcome the move by the UK authorities and other European countries that have arrested suspects.

"Send them home. It has been proven that they can have a free and fair trial in Rwanda."

Also arrested was Dr Vincent Bajinya, 52, the former head of the National Population Office, and Dr Celestin Mutabaruka, who at the time of the genocide headed a project called Crete Zaire Nil.

Dr Bajinya was a medical doctor at the time of his arrest, working for a London-based charity that helps victims of torture. Dr Mutabaruka, 57, was a pastor in an Ashford community church called Fountain Church.

The same week, Norwegian police put in custody Eugene Nkuranyabahizi, who is also suspected to have taken part in the killings in the former Nyakizu Commune, also in Southern Province. He had been hiding in the Nordic country for more than 13 years.

Rwanda is now confident that its efforts to pursue genocide suspects are bearing fruit despite some fugitives having eluded justice for 19 years now.

According to the head of the Genocide Fugitive Tracking Unit (GFTU), Jean Bosco Siboyintore, Rwanda is confident that European countries will no longer allow genocide fugitives on their soil.

“We appreciate the steps being taken by some countries in responding to Rwanda’s requests to extradite or try some of these cases,” Mr Siboyintore told *Rwanda Today*.

“Nineteen years is too long. It is important that countries are beginning to realise the gravity of genocide charges. We think the momentum is building up. Rwanda thinks that if some of these individuals cannot be extradited at least they should be tried from where they are,” he said.

Four of the five men arrested in the UK had been apprehended in 2007. They were however able to secure their release two years later after the British government said there were fears that they would not get a fair trial in Rwanda if extradited.

The decision, which infuriated Kigali, was based on the idea that the former International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) had refused to send cases to the country for the same reason. However, the Arusha-based tribunal has since referred several cases to Rwanda for trial.

The most serious charges

The UK could not try the four since the crimes they were being accused of were not committed on British soil. However, the British government now says the five men, who had lived in the UK for more than a decade, are facing “the most serious charges” of murder and genocide in their native country.

At their appearance in court, the judge said that each of the five men faces identical charges which are equivalent in British law to offences covering genocide, inciting and abetting genocide, as well as murder and conspiracy to murder.

Dr Bajinya, from Islington, north London, is accused of being a member of the Akazu, the inner circle of former Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, who allegedly plotted and organised the wholesale slaughter of ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Prosecuting on behalf of Rwanda, Gemma Lindfield said that, besides being accused of being involved in the planning, Dr Bajinya, who acquired British citizenship and changed his family name to Brown, had had a hands-on role in the genocide.

She said: “He organised and commanded roadblocks at which Tutsis were killed, and he himself participated in a murder.”

The extradition hearing is set for October.

Rwanda welcomed the arrests, with Prosecutor-General Martin Ngoga saying the country was ready to try the suspects.

“Rwanda will wait for the British courts to go through their procedures,” Mr Ngoga said. “We recognise their independence and hope the proceedings can be completed quickly so that the accused can face justice.”

Saying the five have cases to answer in Rwanda, Mr Ngoga added that their extradition would be a gain for the Rwandan judiciary, which had filed the relevant requests.

Mr Dusingizemungu said if the suspects cannot be sent back to Rwanda, the countries holding them should try them. He called on other countries to follow the UK’s example.

The five have pleaded their innocence, saying they were victims of political persecution and did not take part in the genocide. But there had been increasing pressure on Britain to arrest the five, who were thought to be living on social benefits, with some having secured jobs in the public sector.

No safe haven

Redress, an international human rights organisation which has been pushing for their apprehension, welcomed the arrest. The group said: “Nowhere, including the UK, ought to be a safe haven for those accused of genocide and international crimes.”

The arrests follow several key transfers of genocide suspects, the most recent being Charles Bandora from Norway, but a big number of fugitives are still in Europe. GFTU records show that France is home to at least 25 key suspects while fresh case files are still being unearthed.

Since the unit started its work in 2007, it has compiled about 1,095 case files, out of which 132 indictments and arrest warrants have been issued in 23 countries, especially in Europe and Africa.