

**Daily Gazette Essex County Standard**

## **Jack Straw: Rwandan genocide suspect could face UK trial**

7th May 2009

**James Dwan**



### **Denies claims – Celestin Ugirashebuja with his wife Marie Jose**

A MAN accused of playing a part in the Rwandan genocide could stand trial in the UK under changes to the law.

Celestin Ugirashebuja, of Garden Road, Walton, was one of four men who won a High Court battle against being extradited to Rwanda last month, after judges ruled they might not receive a fair trial.

But Justice Secretary Jack Straw says he is giving “active consideration” to making genocide an extra-territorial offence.

Mr Ugirashebuja, who was a local government official, is accused of killing, or conspiring with or aiding and abetting others, to kill members of the Tutsi ethnic group during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 – in which 800,000 people were murdered.

Speaking to the Gazette, his solicitor, Colin Nott, said Mr Ugirashebuja denied the allegations but did not welcome standing trial.

“No one welcomes a trial,” he said. “People say they do but it’s not quite right. “No one in their right mind welcomes a trial, but if we have a trial, we will deal with it.”

The announcement by Mr Straw comes after Labour’s Mary Creagh, vice-chairwoman of the all-party parliamentary group on genocide prevention, warned the UK could become a “safe haven” for people accused of crimes against humanity. She said: “Thanks to a loophole in UK law, they can not now be tried for those crimes of which they were accused, in England.”

She asked Mr Straw to close the “impunity gap” and “ensure that the UK does not become a safe haven for international criminals”.

Mr Straw said Ms Creagh had “made a very powerful case for the inclusion of genocide as an extra-territorial offence within British law”. He added: “I am currently giving it active consideration with my other relevant colleagues.”

Mr Ugirashebuja was set free from Belmarsh Prison last month, after spending more than two years in custody. He had been held since December 2006 under a memorandum of understanding in which Rwanda waived the death penalty.

Supporters of Mr Ugirashebuja, who is a member of Frinton’s St Mary’s parish church, welcomed the ruling.