

Protais Zigiranyirazo: The rise and fall of ‘Monsieur Z’ - a cautionary tale of greed and power

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The death of Protais Zigiranyirazo on 3 August 2025 in Niamey, Niger brought an end to the life of one of Rwanda’s most notorious, powerful and murderous citizens in the years before and during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

‘Monsieur Z’ as he was known, was born in Birembo, Giciye commune, in the north western Prefecture of Gisenyi, on 2 February 1938. He was one of four children of the successful Hutu businessman/trader Gervais Magera. Z’s younger sister, Agathe Kanziga married Juvenal Habyarimana on 17 August 1963, then an upcoming army officer who was to seize power in July 1973 and become president. Z’s brother, Elie Sagatwa, became President Habyarimana’s security/intelligence chief while his cousin, Seraphin Rwabukumba, (often referred to as his brother) ran an import/export business, *La Centrale*, for immense personal and familial profit.

Z attended the local primary schools in Rambura and Nyando from 1946-52, and then *Ecole des Moniteurs* in Byumba, but failed to complete his secondary school studies. In this period, the late 1950s/early 1960s, Rwanda descended into social and political chaos, as independence from Belgium approached. Widespread anti-Tusti pogroms resulted in hundreds of thousands of the minority ethnic group fleeing the violence that also left thousands dead and displaced. Against this background Z started his first job as a teacher in Rambura, the home parish of Habyarimana. In 1964, despite his own failure to complete secondary school, Z was made headteacher at Ramhero school but his voracious political ambitions were already coming to the fore. His brother-in-law Juvenal Habyarimana was experiencing a meteoric rise, being promoted to head the new Rwandan army and become defence minister. Using his new family connections, Z moved from teaching to politics. Despite no previous diplomatic experience, Z moved to become *Charge de la Chancellerie and Cultural Affairs* at Rwanda’s most important embassy in Brussels (1966-7) and then transferred to a similar position in Paris (1967-69). In 1969, the 31 year-old schoolteacher-turned diplomat became an MP for his home town of Gisenyi.

The armed coup of 5 July 1973 by General Habyarimana, supported by a cabal of northern army officers, turbo-charged Z’s further political rise. With his sister Agathe now ‘in power’ as the president’s wife, Z was made prefect of Kibuye in the west of the country (1973-4) and 12 months later in December 1974, prefect of Ruhengeri. This key northern prefecture boasted the possibility of highly lucrative trading links in gold, drugs, gorillas and diamonds into neighbouring Uganda and Zaire (DRC). For the next 15 years, Z’s power within the prefecture and within the country was second only to that of the president; indeed, for many, fear of Z and obedience to his whims and wishes far outmatched tenets of loyalty to Habyarimana.



Attending an event in Ruhengeri in around 1984. Z (standing in beige suit second left) next to President Habyarimana (centre). On the front left is Z’s protege Joseph Nzirorera. On the row behind, between Z and Habyarimana is the ever-watchful Col. Elie Sagatwa – Z’s brother. Note: everyone is wearing a lapel pin with a picture of the President (a legal requirement) - except for Z. Loyalty to Z and his needs was, for those chosen by him, the way to immediate prosperity far more than to the President and state.

Habyarimana's self-proclaimed 'bloodless' military coup 5 July 1973 which unseated the unpopular, insular and alcoholic President Gregoire Kayibanda, was promoted to Rwanda's notable foreign backers (France, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany) as a 'peaceful' transition of power. In fact, the former president, his wife Veridianne, and hundreds of his ministers, officers and political backers from the centre/south of the country were arrested, tortured and murdered over the following months and years.

The head of the Rwandan SCI (intelligence services) Col. Theoneste Lizinde noted at his own later trial, after he attempted a coup in 1980, that Z was, along with Habyarimana and senior regime figures, responsible for the imprisonment and murders of more than 700 members of the former Kayibanda regime. At his appearance before the notorious State Security Court in 1985, Lizinde told the judges 'I will not say anything until you summon Habyarimana and his brother-in-law Protais Zigiranyirazo here, because it's for their actions that I'm appearing before the Court.' The microphone was swiftly taken from him and court reporting banned. Lizinde argued that in a totalitarian state where even the most minor misdemeanor of a corporal was brought to the attention of senior military officers and Habyarimana, it was impossible for members of the former regime to be imprisoned, tortured, murdered and buried secretly without direct instruction/organisation from the president, deputy head of the army (Col. Laurent Serubuga) and the prefect (Z) of the region where they were held.

After escaping Ruhengeri prison in 1991, Lizinde described the killing of political prisoners:

To carry out that difficult operation, Habyarimana undertook to use people in his confidence from the army or his family. This is evidenced by the fact that all the murders were committed by the members of his in-law family: Protais Zigiranyirazo, who coordinated the operation and Elie Sagatwa ... When Zigiranyirazo assumed his duties at Ruhengeri [as prefect in 1974] he recruited Dr. Cyprien Hakizimana. The latter was tasked to write and sign the fake death certificates.
[Theoneste Lizinde, *Des Massacres cycliques au Rwanda et de la politique du bouc emissaire*, 1991]

After their arrest following the 1973 coup, the prisoners succumbed to torture and starvation in the dark, deadly cells especially reserved for political detainees in the notorious northern prisons of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. The International Red Cross and the Rwandan bishops who asked for access to visit were turned away. Even the justice minister Charles Nkurunziza was barred from entry to the facility though he was responsible for all the prisons in the country. While the torture and murder of hundreds of the former regime went on, the international community showed little or no interest in questioning what had happened to the individuals it had only months previously been working with and who had now suddenly disappeared to the point even their families did not know what had happened to them. Many were held for weeks or months in the special 'cachot noir' cells in Ruhengeri prison – damp, airless, pitch-black cells barely large enough to hold a single prisoner. According to Shyirambere Barahinyura, whose wife was held in Ruhengeri prison in the early 1980s and who witnessed the torture and treatment of prisoners first hand, Z had an office directly across from the place where prisoners would be brought to be tortured. He was often present along with Presidential Guard. Z's prefectural office was less than half a mile from the prison.



Ruhengeri prison: A place of torture and death in the 1970s and 80s under Z's rule as prefect.

Hundreds of political prisoners would be tortured and murdered in Ruhengeri – and their bodies disposed of by burning or being thrown into anonymous pits along the Gisenyi road - graves which they were forced to dig before being killed: Godefroid Nyilibakwe, Fidele Nzanana, Augustin Munyaneza, Froduald Minani, Athanase

Mbarubukeye, Gaspard Harelimana, Andre Bizimana, Mathias Misago, Claver Ndahayo, Maximilian Niyonzima Niyoyita Dominique, Zihinjishi Oscar, Aloys Bisabo, Siridio Habimana, Charles Nubashyimpura, Gallican Nyamwasa ... the list of former members of the regime goes on and on... all were murdered while in Z's 'care.'

After the failed 1980 coup, and with his political rival Lizinde ousted, Z's route to power, via Agathe and his brother-in-law the president, continued without hindrance. In court, acting with Lizinde's intelligence services (SCR) replacement, Joseph Habyambere, Z ensured that sentences of the courts met that which he expected of it – notably during the trials of those suspected of being behind the publication of tracts critical of the regime and its corruption. According to Christophe Mfizi, with his control of the SCR/state security organs through his 'vassal' Habyambere and his brother Sagatwa, Z was able to nullify any perceived threats and/or criticisms so that they never reached Habyarimana's ears. Z decided, along with Sagatwa, what information the president was told and what he was kept in the dark about.

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Uzinjira ute mu mashuri yisumbuye?

Urubanza rw'abashinjwa hamwe na LIZINDE...
— SERUVUMBA Anastase —

SHIMANA Karoli, NGIRUWONSA-NGA Felisiani na GAHAMANYI BAHENWA Anakeletse, batangiye bigeze bafungwa barepanga ko kuba bali i Kigali banayagajije za nyandiko zacye igihugu umugongo mu mwaka wa 1980 zigamije gubikira ubutegetsi.

UBUCUTI BWICA

Nyuma yo kubashinja rusange buri wese yabonye umwanya wo kwiragura ari we nyine.

MUSABE Emeransi: Bamubajije ibya za nyandiko, yabakanye ko nta narumwe yigeze acisha mu jisho ly' uretse ko ngo yajyaga abumvane abahisi n'abagenzi. Baje no kumubaza umubano we na Lizinde bimwe byo kugenekereza by'abacamanza ngo bumwe niba Lizinde atahagaze amamenera akabanga. Yemera ko Lizinde yigeze kujya abasura bakili i Cyangugu kuko yari ishuri ya barumu be. Nyuma aho ngo Musabe yigeze kumubona ko yamubashije amashyamba yari yatanze ku mapapuro z'uzuzura ubwo yandaga kujyana n'umugabo we w'umudaga iwabo nyuma ngo bikaza gufika. Nyuma aho ngo Lizinde yamushyiriyemo amashyamba kuri Mubizi amukoresha ibyo atifuzaga ngo abonye bamurakajije amaha ibihumbi 10. Cyakora na mbere ngo yari yaligere kumushyirizaho. Yaragaje avuye ko umubano we na Lizinde ntabwo uhariye no gubashyirizaho amashyamba y'igihugu.

Bawemo mu bacamanza baraburanyishije ubereye ibumoso: Koloneli Mayoya - Nshomurukye Sineso na Major Rwanyagasore

Kuva ku ya 18 kugeza ku ya 29 Mata aya mwaka mu Rubengeri haburanyije abantu bageze kuri 27 bakabikwiranyisho ibiryo Lizinde n'abo bafatanije bareguye.

Mulibuka ko mu Munyamuryango n° 166 yo mu Gashyamba n'Ukoboza twabagejeho uko abantu bageze kuri 50 bareze, uko haburanyije n'icyo urukiko rwabaganyeye. Twahamye byese kandi ko igihe twabagezagabo icyo nyandiko bali abashyamba bafatwa niba bashinjwa kimwe n'aba mbere.

Umwe mu haburanyije mu Rubengeri igihe cy'urubanza rwa Lizinde yagize ati: «Igiti...

Umunyamuryango, June 1983: A regime newsletter gives its account of Lizinde's trial for treason. Two of the judges pictured here (Col. Stanislas Mayoya on left and Col. Rwanyagasore on right) would themselves later fall victim to Z/Akazu.

As prefect of Ruhengeri, Z was supposedly the representative of central power – the president of this authoritarian, single party, regime. In reality, he ruled the prefecture according to his own whims, diktats, influence and acolytes. Resources were redistributed to enrich himself, but also those chosen to enact his needs, on the understanding they would be mutual beneficiaries. The most brazen of these beneficial relationships was with Joseph Nzirorera, Minister of Public Works, who enabled massive 'leakages' of public funds and those from international donors into his own bank accounts – and those of Z and the presidential family. As Z recruited and nurtured the careers of individuals like Nzirorera, so in turn they recruited their own clients within this parallel network. In Nzirorera's case, it made him one of Rwanda's first RWF billionaires.



NZIRORERA YIKETSE AMABABA!

Two cartoons illustrating the endemic corruption and the cost to the country. Left: *Isibo* 5 April 1991: Public works minister and Z acolyte Joseph Nzirorera 'swallows a road' – a reference to the way he systematically stole public funds to benefit Z, himself and his own client network; Right: *Umuhanzi*, 8 June 1991: The stealing of international funds by the president's MRND party in turn benefitted Habyarimana's personally selected prefects, bourgmeisters (mayors) and commune administrators while depriving the nascent opposition parties the means to grow.



Within the prefecture, Z's power was total. Driving through towns and villages he would stop to offer a 'ride' to pretty women – married or single – and woe betide any husband or fiancé who may object. Businesses could only operate with his allowance – and a suitable 'tax' paid to him; those who wanted preferment in any way could gain it only with Z's own permission. He established a network of informants in all areas of local life - the church, business, cafes, bars and schools. Critics of 'Lord Z', were rewarded with cells at Ruhengeri prison. As the former minister Boniface Ruchagu - a politician who personally benefitted from Z's largesse - noted:

Z was someone everyone was afraid of, even the military as well as local and national leaders. I was certainly very much afraid of him, because even a simple dispute could not last more than two days before he would complain to his brother-in-law and suddenly you had Habyarimana taking action against you. Z was obsessed with power.

Christophe Mfizi, the head of state information service ORINFOR during the 1980s and someone who was brave enough to risk clashes with Z, noted the growth of what he termed 'Zedist' loyalists and 'Zedist' politics. Once appointed by the prefect, such 'Zedist' loyalists would enjoy cuts of profits, local power or personal benefits. In return they would ensure Z's 'needs' in the locality were fully carried out. As well as Joseph Nzirorera, the academic turned media mogul Ferdinand Nahimana and Hassan Ngeze – who would both later be found guilty for their roles with Hutu hate radio RTLM and the extremist paper *Kangura* respectively – were notable for being nurtured by Z. Augustin Bizimana, defence minister during the genocide of 1994, also owed his 'creation' and promotion to Z's patronage. The new university building at Nyakinama, 15 km from Ruhengeri, proved to be a highly effective instrument to promote Z, with its administrators and academics suitably 'zedified.' Men such as Daniel Mbangura. Minister of Education in the interim genocidal regime of 1994, as well as Nahimana and Hutu firebrand Leon Mugesera became part of his network. On a political level, elections were rigged to ensure compliant local MPs and administrators. In the 1985 elections to the Ruhengeri Chamber of Commerce, Z sought to corrupt the polling officers to ensure his own candidates were elected. In the 1988 parliamentary elections to Z's home prefecture of Gisenyi, Z drew up a list of those elected even before the elections took place to ensure his loyalists were suitably rewarded.

Ruhengeri effectively became a state within a state. Those who crossed Z could expect immediate ramifications. The Director of the Pyrethe Bureau, Proper Musekweli was imprisoned for a year on false charges after falling out with Z. Dr. Janvier Rusizana was thrown into prison after his wife dared to knock back Z's amorous advances. Bourgmeisters (mayors) were sacked after failing to carry out the prefect's demands. According to former minister Juvenal Uwilingiyimana, who was later murdered in Brussels, Z was highly unpopular but also greatly feared, and 'carried out arbitrary arrests and detentions in order to attain his goals'. While other prefects were answerable to the interior minister Thomas Habanabakize who was responsible for all of them and would call them out in central meetings when they failed in their jobs, Z was never challenged. Uwilingiyimana owed his own promotion to Minister for commerce and industry in the early 1980s to Z's intervention with Habyarimana – and equally his sacking from the post a few years later was due to his refusal to appoint Z's nominee as National President of the Chamber of Commerce. Z could make and break a career – and a life –

according to his own needs and whims. Those within the presidential circle noted that despite the constant information that Z's power was endemic and out of control, Habyarimana took no action and showed intense irritation when the subject was raised.

As with so many wealthy businessmen today, Z used his power and wealth to patronise a major Rwandan football team, Mukungwa FC, which became known as 'Prefect Z's team'. Local businesses and individuals were 'persuaded' by Z to regularly donate to the team under threat of being closed down or a personal tragedy befalling them. With referees threatened and bribed, Mukungwa FC won the national league in 1988 and 1989. Parades through the town with his victorious team was a flamboyant way for Z to solidify his legend of invincibility and power to the populace.

In the late 1970s and 80s Habyarimana portrayed Rwanda as the 'Switzerland' of Africa: a well-managed/governed, peaceful and prosperous country amid the turmoil of the rest of the continent. Rwanda was a one-party state (all inhabitants were member of the MRND from birth), with all media under state control, administrators appointed directly by the President and education and business opportunities reliant on the personal approval of those in power. Parallel to the state was a mafia-like network, later termed by opponents around 1990/1 as *Akazu* ('Little House' or '*Le Clan de Madame*'). Centered on Z's sister, Agathe, the President's wife, Z, Sagawta and Rwabukumba - the family spread mafia-like tentacles into every aspect of Rwandan life and society – prefects, bourgmeisters (mayors) and sector/cell leaders, businessmen, military, gendarmes (police), church leaders, journalists and academics. Shortly after being sacked from ORINFOR by Habyarimana on Z's 'advice,' Christophe Mfizi was advised in very guarded tones by one of the prefects 'Menya ko ingoma yabaye iy'umugore na bsaza be sha', - 'Remember, you must know that the regime is in the hands of that woman and her brothers.'



'Prince Z': in action as Prefect of Ruhengeri (1974-89) where he controlled the lives of all 'his' people.

In the beautiful volcano national park surrounding Ruhengeri town there were plenty of financial fruits to enjoy for this growing *Akazu* mafia network. In the 1980s the World Bank had launched the 'GBK' project aimed at supporting the last area of bio-diverse forest in the country. However, millions of dollars were swiftly siphoned off, and instead of securing the precious forest, *Akazu* figures including Z seized large area of the land, which was cleared and used for lucrative farms. Z benefited substantially by awarding himself two large plots of the forest.

Gordon himself was harassed and threatened by Z and was forced to leave the country under threat of ending up dead. He described Z at this time as a man with:

two flaws in his character, two weaknesses if you like: money and sex. [He was] a charmer, polite, well-groomed in his selection of K-suits, a man who makes women feel important. He likes the feel of gold on his body. He wears two large expensive rings. He doesn't drink much and he doesn't frequent the more raucous of the city's nightspots like Kigali Nights and Chez Lando. Z prefers to entertain in the placid and sophisticated surrounds of the fourth-floor bar and restaurant of the Milles Collines [hotel], or in a private suit he rents at another Kigali hotel, the Rugiro. He has been married twice and runs five mistresses, which, of course, costs money. Three of the girls live in Ruhengeri and two in Kigali.

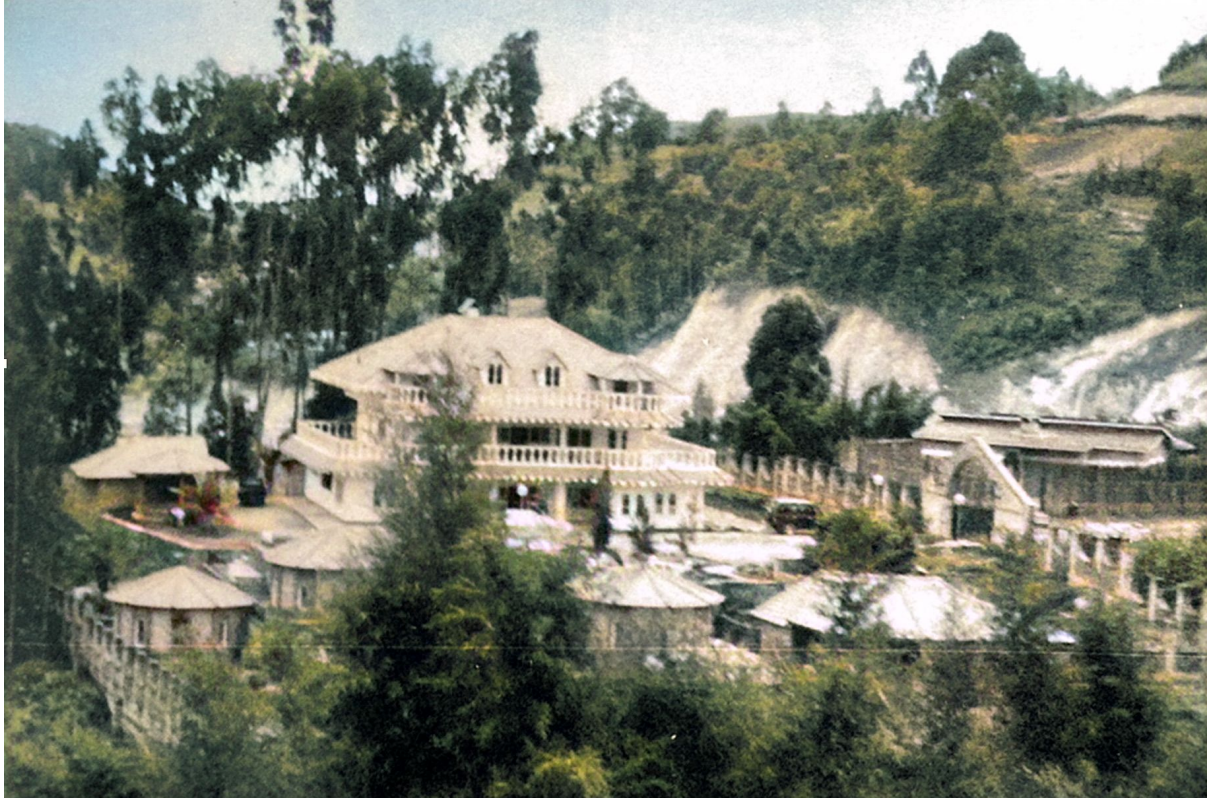
By the late 1980s Z's power and wealth seemed unstoppable, with no opposition that could not be disposed of without undue difficulty. In this period in the late 1980s - before the RPF invasion of 1990, before multiparty politics broke open MRND's political monopoly in 1991, and before the advent of radical opposition media - Z's Ruhengeri empire was untouchable. Z was able to bribe judges to get the jail term of a certain Michel Karambizi, the brother of his good friend and businessman Silas Majyambere, halved and then for him to be released from prison by presidential pardon in January 1989 (see: *Nyabarongo*, 13 May 1991). And with wealth and power came property to match. In 1988 Z was able to show off his latest new 'palace', built in his home prefecture of Gisenyi and near to Habyarimana's own palace. Z's luxurious 'pagoda' palace was inaugurated with a champagne reception and party. The archbishop of Kigali - the Habyarimana loyalist Fr. Vincent Nsengiyumva was called upon with the bishops of Nyundo and Ruhengeri to give the new residence their official blessing and that of the Catholic Church. The 'great and the good' of *Akazu* attended the fine party, in a display of personal and familial greed, state capture and corruption. At the same time Habyarimana's people lived in the most country ranked bottom of almost every global poverty indices, made worse by a famine in the south, an AIDS crisis, and spiralling inflation.



Le Partisan, 7 October 1992 – Accusations, public and in secret, were rife that Habyarimana and his family were behind Col. Mayuya's murder – with Z being central to the plot; Right: the gorilla expert Dian Fossey – an earlier victim of Z and *Akazu*.

As the 1980s came to an end so did *Akazu's* – and Z – unrivalled and uncommented upon state plunder and unopposed power. The murder of the Colonel Stanislas Mayuya in Spring 1988, seen as a rival to *Akazu's* future power, as well as the killings of other perceived threats such as Habyarimana's two influential brothers Téléphore Uwayezu and Mélane Nzabakikante, MPs, military officers, journalists and clerics, were indicative of *Akazu* under threat. Z's involvement in the murder of Col. Stanislas Mayuya – who was shot dead while leaving his office by a sergeant named Birori – was an open, if unspoken, secret. This upright officer who had not been ensnared by *Akazu* was being openly spoken about as a probable heir to Habyarimana. As such Mayuya

was a direct threat to the current power structure. The permanent removal of this popular, uncorrupted individual by *Akazu* was, in hindsight, almost inevitable. According to a later media investigation, Z promised Birori, a Tutsi from the south, one million Rwandan francs to carry out the murder, with the threat that his own family would be killed if he refused. Birori was arrested and murdered in prison soon after he had shot Mayuyya. As with Fossey, the regime swiftly covered its tracks by killing all those involved in the plot, and arresting three innocent military officers as scapegoats.



*Z's Pagoda palace near Gisenyi – officially 'blessed' by the Rwandan Catholic archbishop.
It was destroyed after 1994.*

Credit: Heather Hudson

In 1989 President Habyarimana attempted to reassert his diminished authority and finally responded to the growing criticism and complaints that Z's corruption and power were out of control and threatening the state and its vital foreign funders. Habyarimana persuaded Z to take a 'student' sabbatical by undertaking 'academic studies' in Political Science at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) in Canada. It was a remarkable move given Z was a middle-aged man who had not even completed his secondary school studies. The bitter pill of losing his prefecture in Ruhengeri was heavily sweetened. The Rwandan state paid him a very handsome government bursary to ensure the former prefect was content – enough it was said to pay for all the other African students studying with him; for Z it was also golden opportunity to build up a new property and business portfolio/network in north America on the back of money from his Ruhengeri years, while entrusting his Rwandan business and political ambitions to a large network of 'Zedist' loyalists now in place back home.

During the following period between 1989 and 1993, when he was expelled from Canada, Z travelled to and from the country on his 'student' visa. Despite taking regime funds to become a (very) mature student in Canada, he was often back in Kigali, juggling his business needs and personal ambitions/networks. Rumours that Z had been stopped on his way to Canada by Kenyan customs officers in Nairobi, who discovered hundreds of thousands of dollars in his travel bags, were always denied by the former prefect. Also denied by Z, this time in a Canadian court, was that he made threats to kill Rwandan Tutsis also living in Montreal. In February 1993 Z had screamed death threats at two members of the Rwandan Collective for Human Rights at the Berri-Uqam metro station in the city. Z had taken exception to comments the two Rwandan opposition political activists had made to the Canadian media where they had accused him of involvement in Rwandan death squads that were targeting the ethnic minority after the RPF invasion in October 1990. Z denied the charges in court but was found guilty. Judge Maximilien Polak told the former prefect that his testimony had been evasive, hesitant, contradictory and dishonest. He was given a 12-month suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay a \$5000 fine. When he attempted to re-enter the country on 24 September 1993 he was arrested and deported.

Zigiranyirazo condamné pour ses menaces de mort

LUCIE CÔTE

■ Accusé d'avoir proféré des menaces de mort à l'endroit de deux de ses compatriotes rwandais réfugiés au Canada, à la station de métro Berri-UQAM, le 12 février dernier, Protalis Zigiranyirazo a été reconnu coupable hier au palais de justice de Montréal et a été condamné à payer une amende de 5 000 \$.

Le juge Maximilien Pojak, de la Cour du Québec, a ordonné que l'argent soit versé à l'organisme Oxfam-Québec pour soulager les souffrances des réfugiés rwandais membres de la minorité.

Il était justement question du massacre de la minorité Tutsi lors de l'altercation de février entre l'accusé et ses deux victimes, Fidèle Makombe, président de la Ligue rwandaise des droits de l'homme, et Jean-Paul Kimonyo, coordonnateur du Collectif des associations rwandaises du Canada.

Âgé de 55 ans, Protalis Zigiranyirazo, ex-gouverneur d'une province, beau-frère du président rwandais Juvénal Habyarimana et étudiant en sciences politiques à l'UQAM, a reproché aux deux hommes de faire une campagne de satanisme contre lui en le pointant comme responsable des escadrons de la mort et leur a déclaré: «Je vais vous tuer».

Le juge Pojak, qui a souligné le comportement tendu et défensif de l'accusé pendant le procès et a qualifié son témoignage d'«évanescent, hésitant, contradictoire et pas franc», a refusé de lui accorder l'absolution inconditionnelle demandée par son avocat, Me Clement Monterosso, qui avait parlé en défense de scénario monté contre son client.

«Ce serait trop plement. Je considère que des menaces ont été faites; il s'agit d'une offense tout de même très grave et je veux être certain que ça ne se répète plus. On est au Canada et ici, le genre de choses n'est pas toléré», a déclaré le juge en s'adressant à l'accusé.

«Je vais tout de même être élement parce que l'accusé n'a pas d'antécédents judiciaires», dit-il toutefois indiquant que l'accusé.

Zigiranyirazo a donc reçu une sentence suspendue et est sous le coup d'une ordonnance de probation de 12 mois, assortie de certaines conditions: ne pas troubler l'ordre public et ne pas communiquer avec ses deux victimes.

Puisque le juge ne lui a pas imposé de peine d'emprisonnement, Protalis Zigiranyirazo est désormais libre de quitter le pays à sa guise, ce que craignent ses victimes, qui ont demandé au printemps au gouvernement d'enquêter sur son rôle de responsable des escadrons de la mort au Rwanda.

«Nous aurions souhaité que Zigiranyirazo soit incarcéré jusqu'à ce que le ministère de la Justice prononce une décision définitive. Je demandons que cette décision, quelle qu'elle soit, soit prise dans les plus brefs délais, avant que Zigiranyirazo ne parte», a déclaré hier Jean-Paul Kimonyo.

Si le gouvernement accorde à la CIR le permission d'aller enquêter sur les agissements de Zigiranyirazo au Rwanda et que les allégations de crimes contre l'humanité avancées par la Ligue rwandaise des droits de l'homme et la Communauté rwandaise de Montréal s'avèrent fondées, Zigiranyirazo devrait nécessairement se trouver en sol canadien pour que des accusations soient portées contre lui.

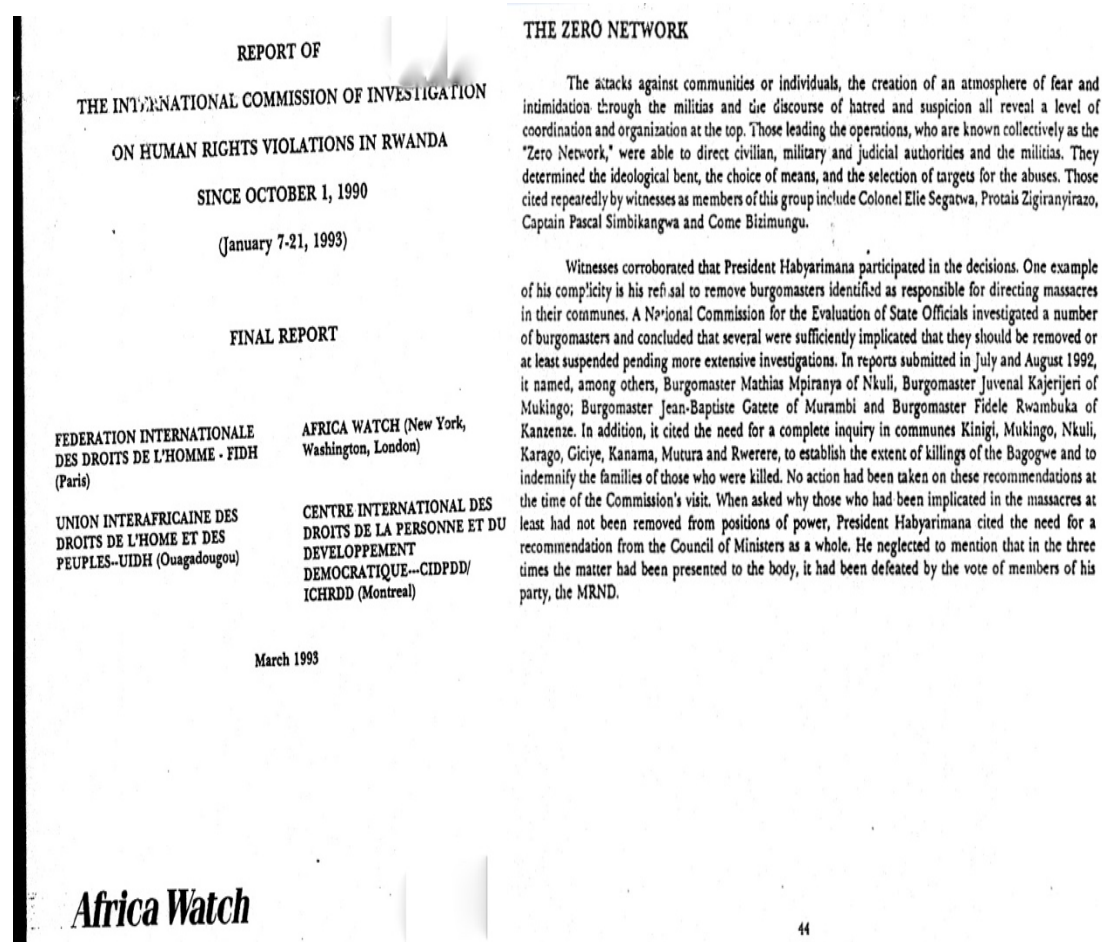
La Presse 31 July 1993: The Montreal newspaper reports the story of Z's conviction for death threats to Tutsi

In Rwanda, the early 1990s were marked by a descent into anarchy and genocide. The invasion of the country in Autumn 1990 by the armed wing of the Rwandese Popular Front (RPF) from neighbouring Uganda marked a sudden and urgent threat to the regime it had not experienced during its 17 years in power. Made up in most part of Tutsi refugees who had been forced into exile in the 1960s and 70s and been barred from returning by Habyarimana, the RPF saw a military solution as the only way to 'come home.' Allied to this military threat was the explosive growth of internal political opposition to the regime after multi-party politics were allowed for the first time in 1991 after pressure from France. Added to this were rising unemployment, currency devaluation, an on-going famine in the south, and a new opposition media landscape that targeted the corruption, nepotism, and lawlessness engendered by the state during its two decades in power.

In an open letter published on 29 October 1992, Colonel Charles Uwihoreye, who had been involved as the army commander in Ruhengeri tasked with fighting an armed RPF incursion, revealed the longtime harassment he had suffered from Z. 'I always avoided being involved in the intrigues that were common in the region. But as Z was well known for his fraudulent activities such as trafficking gorillas he considered me an enemy... after Mayuya was killed he tried to get me imprisoned along with three other officers falsely accused of the murder'. Uwihoreye went on to accuse Agathe and her brother Sagatwa (head of security) of initiating a plan to kill some of these accused officers in Ruhengeri prison. When Uwihoreye instructed the prison director not to obey the order, Z ordered the prison director to be imprisoned, where he later died.

In August 1992, while safely staying in France, former state information minister Christophe Mfizi published an explosive resume entitled 'The Zero Network'. The 'Z' in 'Zero' was apposite and was a direct reference to Z. Mfizi described this Zero Network as:

a hardcore of people who have methodically pervaded the entire national life at the political, military, financial, agricultural, scientific, family and even religious level. This clique considers the country as a company which they can legitimately derive maximum benefit from, and this justifies all types of policies. The 'Zero Network' stands out as the leading defender of the present Head of State and leader of the MRND party, even if it means bringing him down to the level of clan head... it literally imprisons the party leader and head of state in an outdated 'leadership' (rule)... It is the Zero Network that is chiefly accountable for the national fiasco and plummeting credibility of the head of state...and has stoked ethnic and regional divisions to cover its agenda and interests. The Zero Network is all the more powerful because it is secret and has considerable financial and other unnamed means.



The International Commission Report of Human Rights Violations in Rwanda, March 1993. Z is named as a leader of the Zero Network that targeted abuses in the country. The results of the inquiry were corroborated those by the Belgium senator Willy Kuijpers and by the UN rapporteur in their own separate investigations.

Mfizi had, in his role as head of ORINFOR during the 1980s, been privy to the gradual but creeping growth of this 'politico-mafioso' network, which had expanded into all areas of Rwandan life and society. It had no 'philosophy' or set ideology, but was based on absolute pragmatism – that is the enrichment and continued retention of power by Z and those within the enlarged group. Network Zero, Mfizi felt, was like the gleaming new structure of Hotel Rebero that Habyarimana had built on one of the hills overlooking Kigali: Hotel Rebero could be seen from all quarters of the city – and equally could see into all areas. It radiated power, influence and riches – and also fear: *'The zero Network, which later became an instrument of economic predation, allowed its creator to occupy the public administration, political and civilian, the political bodies as well as the private sector. Using methods of intimidation, pressure, corruption by the distribution of sizeable income, the Zero Network intensified their influence.'* (Mfizi, 2006)

INTERA

N° 3 Tariki 15 Mutarama 1990 - Ikiguzi: 30 Frw

Abanyarwanda bahagurukiye guteza imbere ubukerarugendo

Aloys MUNDERE



Iyo bashatse kwerekana ku ikarita ahantu hari uruganda bakoresha igishushanyo cy'inzu ifite umunara ucucumukamo umwotsi. Kandi koko bene izo nganda zibyara imyótsi ijyana akenshi no guhumanya ibidukije niyo abenshi bamenyerewe.

Nyamara burya hari n'urundi rwego rw'inganda zitagira imyotsi zigizwe ahanini n'ibikorwa by'ubukerarugendo. Igihugu cyacu kikaba gifite amahirwe yo kugira ubwiza kamere cyihereye n'Imana bugomba ariko kunganirwa n'ibikorwa by'aba-



ntu bituma ubwo bwiza bushobora gusurwa no kurushaho kumenyekana. Muri ibyo bikorwa twavuye nk'imihanda n'amahoteli cyangwa ahandi hantu hubakirwa kwakira abashyitsi no kubaramira.

Ntawabura rero kwishimira

teza imbere ubukerarugendo. Twongere twibutse kandi ko mu bihugu bitari bike nka Kenya ubukerarugendo bwamaze gufata umwanya wa mbere mu byinjiza amadovize.

Ubukerarugendo rero nti-bushobora gutera imbere nta

Intera, January 1990: Rebero Hotel – a 'tourist' development.

Set up by Z's brother Seraphin Rwabukumba as a regime/Network Zero mouthpiece to counter the growing opposition press in the late 1980s, Intera collapsed after just a few issues. In the poorest country in the world, its news headline promoting the regime's latest luxury hotel only available to those not just with money but with connections, was symptomatic of Rwanda seventeen years into Habyarimana's rule. While the political/economic and social world inside Rwanda was changing rapidly, Akazu was still promoting its self-aggrandising and self-serving mantra. The hotel was later used for major fundraising events for the Interahamwe militia and was a favourite haunt of Agathe and her family – including as it did both a large panoramic swimming pool and a zoo/snake enclosure for her children.

In the early 1990s extensive investigations by international human rights groups identified a death squad/network ('Reseau Zero') that acted at the behest of Akazu to kill political opponents/Tutsi. The aim was primarily to ferment unrest aimed at solidifying the Hutu majority behind the president's floundering MRND party. In their final report issued in March 1993, the International Commission for Human Rights referred to the organised genocidal massacres of hundreds of Tutsi Bagogwe. The killings of the Bagogwe, who lived in the north west in the heartland of Akazu, had taken place between the end of January and March 1991. Z was named as a leading organiser along with his brother Sagatwa, and Joseph Nzirorera.

Genocidal massacres of Tutsi had also taken place at Kibilira within days of the 1990 invasion and nationally would continue for the following three years. On 9 October 1992, after a separate investigation by Belgian Senator Willy Kuijpers and Johann Scheers, Professor Filip Reyntjens issued a report entitled 'Information on the death squads.' He noted that 'at the national level, the hard core of the group is made up of, *inter alia*, the following individuals: Joseph Nzirorera (former minister, Ruhengeri member of Parliament), Proteas Zigiranyirazo (former prefect of Ruhengeri, brother-in-law of the President), Seraphim Rwabukumba (chief executive of 'la Centrale', brother-in-law of the President), Col. Laurent Serubuga (former deputy Chief of Staff of the army), Col. Elie Sagatwa (personal assistant to and brother-in-law of the President)...' He accused them of using army recruits (often disguised as civilians) and *Interahamwe* to attack predetermined targets such as Tutsi families and members of the opposition, causing hundreds of deaths and aimed at national destabilization.

LES RAVAGES ECONOMIQUES DE "L'AKAZU CONNEXION"

L'ouverture politique avec ses pendants, les partis et la presse prolifique ont introduit dans le langage politique le mot "Akazu". L'Akazu n'est pas un mode de jargon des médias rwandais. C'est plutôt toute une affaire: la famille HABYARIMANA et consorts, qui, écrit-on, ont fait du Rwanda la chose familiale. Tant on a écrit ou parlé sur le patrimoine colossal, extorqué du pays par la grande famille présidentielle. Mais rares sont des documents permettant de mettre à nu ces scandales politico-financiers et l'importance de leur cercle d'influence. On fait état, entre autres, du bradage des devises de la Banque Centrale, la main basse sur des marchés publics, le détournement des aides extérieures, l'achat en sous-main de commerces et de biens immobiliers. Dernièrement la rumeur public s'était déchaînée sur l'escroquerie au dos de nos gorilles des Volcans.

Pointée du doigt, la première dame du pays, Agathe, a quand même le sens de la famille. Son frère SAGATWA, Colonel, est le Secrétaire particulier du Président. L'autre est plus particulièrement connu sous la lettre "Z" car évoquer ZIGIRANYIRAZO Protas, son propre nom a fait trembler plus d'un rwandais. D'ac "Z" et Séraphin RWABUKUMBA, le cousin, sont les principaux acteurs d'un vaste réseau de combines politico-financières qui auraient entraîné pour les seules années 1989-1990, un manque à gagner pour l'Etat de 5 milliards de francs rwandais. La Centrale, cette gigantesque société commerciale à sa tête M. Séraphin RWABUKUMBA détient à elle seule, plus de 50 licences d'importations. Elle contrôle ainsi les arcades de tous les scandales politico-financiers. En passant par J. Pierre, fils aîné du Président ou par le Directeur de l'Office du Thé, M. Michel BAGARAGAZA, une filière de trafic de narco-dollars a prospéré grâce à des complicité parmi les douaniers de l'Aéroport. Régulièrement des caisses, contenant du chanvre sous l'étiquette du thé à l'exportation parvenaient à des correspondants patentés en Europe ou en Amérique au vu et au su de tout le monde.

On cite également le cas des fruits, des légumes, des oeufs ou des produits laitiers provenant des entreprises agro-pastorales de la famille présidentielle. Tous ces produits sont écoulés sur les marchés officiels dans des hôtels de l'ORTPN. On sait bien que l'"Office National du Tourisme" est contrôlé par la Présidence; les prix pratiqués sur "les produits présidentiels" défilent toute concurrence. Les exemples cités représentent évidemment une part infime des activités mercantiles de la Famille présidentielle. Seule une commission spéciale permettrait d'évaluer les ravages économiques causés par les protecteurs des importateurs-fraudeurs et pourrait faire la lumière sur le système "AKAZU".

Vérités d'Afrique - Impamo No 2 du 26 Août 1992

HABIMANA Epa.

Les noms du "Réseau Zéro", les plus cités:

- * ZIGIRANYIRAZO Protas, beau-père du Président, ancien préfet de Ruhengeri;
- * RWABUKUMBA Séraphin, beau-frère du Président, PDG de "La Centrale";
- * NZIRORERA Joseph, ancien ministre, député Ruhengeri;
- * Col. SERUBUGA Laurent, ancien chef EM Armée en retraite;
- * Col. SAGATWA Elie, beau-frère du Président, secrétaire particulier du Président;
- * Mme Dr. RUSHINGAZIGWI Chantale;
- * NTIRIVAMUNDA Alphonse, Ponts et Chaussées, beau-fils du Président;
- * Capt. SIMBIKANGWA Pascal, présidence, beau-frère du Col. Sagatwa;
- * Col. BAGOSORA, Directeur de Cabinet Minadef;
- * RUCAGU Boniface, député Ruhengeri;
- * Maj. NKUNDIYE Léonard, Cdt. GP;
- * Col. NSENGIYUMVA Anatole, G2 Armée-Chef des renseignements militaires.

Verites d'Afrique 26 August 1992. 'The economic ravages of the Akazu connection' and the most cited names of 'Reseau Zero' (the death squad). Z features prominently.

Rwandan politics and society disintegrated further during 1992 and 1993: the ongoing civil war, violent intra-political rivalry, the growth of extremist media, economic hardship, increased unemployment and growing state-fuelled violence spiralled out of control. Political parties reacted by creating their own militias that became a means to terrorise opponents and to force their allegiance onto the wider population. The *Interahamwe*, the militia of the president's MRND party, was swiftly expanded both in numbers and objectives – being used to carry out targeted attacks on political opponents and genocidal massacres of Tutsi. As a senior former *Interahamwe* later testified, Z was a leading financial backer of the militia at the national level and locally in Gisenyi – a sign he embraced its role in violently destabilising the state, and showing solidarity with his embattled brother-in-law, the president.

Z was a prominent guest at the infamous political meeting at Kabaya on 22 November 1992, where his academic acolyte Leon Mugesera called for Tutsis to be targeted for killing. He invited those at the meeting to return to his nearby home for drinks afterwards, including Wellars Banzi, the chair of the meeting. The meeting marked a very public new identification by Habyarimana: no longer as the 'man of peace and dialogue' he liked to present to his international backers but instead now identifying irrevocably with 'his' *Interahamwe* – a group whose aim was to sow distrust, disharmony and disorder through acts of extreme violence and murder. For the president, Z and *Akazu*, the *Interahamwe* were seen as a lifeline – a possible salvation, by way of violence, to retain their wealth and position: Split the country ethnically, regionally, socially and economically and then present themselves to the people as their only salvation.



Radio RTLM in action: the mouthpiece and inciter of the genocide



Nyabarongo, no. 13, March 1993. Z, sitting to the left of President Habyarimana and opposite his sister Agathe ['Mukakinani'], along with leading Akazu [Serubuga, Rwabukumba, Rwagafilita, Nzirorera, Ngirumpatse], listens as President Habyarimana tells them he has 'done all he can' when it comes to the Tutsi problem. The Akazu sit at a table surrounded by the skulls of Tutsi they have massacred. The satirical cartoon was published one year before the 1994 genocide began, when on-going genocidal massacres by the group had already murdered thousands of Tutsis. The intent to kill by Akazu was anything but a secret as the media wrote about it and cartoons such as this one appeared. The sense of impunity from justice was clearly apparent.

Personally, the early 1990's were an immense challenge for Z. Unlike the 1980's in Ruhengeri when he could effectively take what he wanted or arrange for it to happen – his business interests during the early 1990's were under huge pressure: keeping several mistresses and several homes was expensive; there were also numerous protégés and a 'Zedist network' to reward/keep onside; supporting the *Interahamwe* and the president in his time of trouble; and an elevated position within society to protect. In Canada, (Montreal), Z had established business links and built a large house within spacious grounds. In Kigali, he had a lucrative partnership with a highly successful import-export businessman named Nurildeen, until it turned sour. Nurildeen's accountant and family members were murdered – killings he blamed on Z trying to exert pressure on them as he wanted to take over their business. It was the *Akazu* way – muscle in on other people's business success and threaten or carry out violent attacks should their take-over be rebuffed. The journalist Nick Gordon found, during his investigations into the Fossey murder in the early 1990s, that Z owed substantial money for business dealings such as five tankers he had taken large loans to buy. When the administrator of such loans like Said Nassor or

the head of the BACAR bank Pasteur Musabe demanded they were repaid, Z reacted by immediately treating them as enemies. Bills for Hotel Urugwiro of one million Rwandan francs were also outstanding - and when asked for repayment by tourism head Juvenal Uwilingiyimana, the result was the same – having the temerity to ask Z for loans or debts to be repaid was seen by him as a personal declaration of war rather than a perfectly reasonable business request. It meant Z began to fall out with equally avaricious former business associates such as Pasteur Musabe, Michel Bagaragaza and Ferdinand Nahimana.



*Z with his businessman brother Seraphim Rwabukumba enjoying power and its many financial rewards, Kigali, early 1990s
Right: Habyarimana with wife Agathe - behind the President is Z's brother and security chief Col. Elie Sagatwa - the malevolent eyes and ears of the regime.*

Genocide

On 6 April 1994 Habyarimana's plane was shot down as he returned from Tanzania where he had been meeting regional leaders with a view to finally implementing the Arusha Accords and the broad-based government that he had successfully stalled from setting up for the past eight months. The president's death was seen as the trigger for the planned genocide. In an effective coup, Colonel Theoneste Bagosora pushed into power a client extremist Hutu power regime led by prime minister Jean Kambanda, and nominated hardliner Augustin Bizimungu as army head. While his sister Agathe and brother Seraphin decided to take advantage of close ties with French leader Francois Mitterrand to fly out to a warm welcome in France, Z moved north to his home region of Gisenyi, accompanying the body of the late president and other members of the family. He was also accompanied by his own personal Presidential Guard bodyguard - remarkable because Z had no official military or political post. It was a sign of how important he was, not least because he was the remaining male member of the immediate presidential family still alive and in the country.

Z's first stop was the Rubaya tea factory where a large arms cache had been hidden previously. Here he lodged for the next three weeks, during which time the majority of Tutsis in the region were murdered. According to Michel Bagaragaza, a one-time close associate of Z, when the former prefect arrived in his home region along with his Presidential Guard escort he was enraged and demanding vengeance on the Tutsis for the death for Habyarimana. His arrival stirred up the populace and the rate of killings increased. The extent to which Z took part in promoting, organising and attending massacres was argued over at his later trial at the ICTR. What is known is that members of his armed military entourage did take part in atrocities and used weapons that came from the Rubaya arms cache. Z cannot have been unaware that these men were returning to the factory each night after daily killing sprees of Tutsi men, women and children across the region. Was he present, and indeed an instigator as many witnesses testified, at the horrific massacre of thousands of terrified Tutsis who had fled to the top of the hill at Kesho? On 8 April as they looked down from the hill they saw dozens of trucks draw up having arrived from the tea factory. Witnesses said both Z and Michel Bagaragaza were present. In the coming hours a bloodbath took place: women clasping their babies, small children, the elderly and sick tried desperately to run from the pursuing heavily armed killers. Estimate put the number of victims at between 1-2,000 people.

Witnesses reported the former prefect continued to meet military and *Interahamwe* figures almost daily to plan continuing massacres in the Gisenyi region. One such meeting, for example, was said to have taken place at the Palm Beach Hotel in Gisenyi in April 1994 where Z invited bourgmeisters (mayors) and commune leaders to plan further action, countermanding the words of the local prefect who had called for an end to the killings at a

meeting at the Umuganda stadium on 23 April.

Within days of Z's arrival back in the north roadblocks were set up throughout Gisenyi, under the control of the military head of the region, Colonel Anatole Nsengiyumva, an extremist who was close to Z and was rumoured to owe his position in this *Akazu* backyard to the ministrations of former prefect. At Z's Gisenyi home, only a few hundred metres from the Zaire (DRC) border and near a location known as *La Corniche*, Tutsis trying to flee over the border into Zaire were stopped. This roadblock, which barred the exit from the country to the desperate Tutsis trying to escape, became known locally as 'Z's barrier' as it was set up just a dozen metres from Z's home. Some were killed there, though most were told they would be taken to the commune office across town near the Gisenyi football stadium where their ID could be checked. This was a ruse, as on arrival they were hacked to death and buried at a place Nsengiyumva named *commune rouge* - the 'red commune' after all the blood that covered the place.

According to Omar Serushago, a Gisenyi trader and lead member of the *Interahamwe* in the town, Z, along with Col. Nsengiyumva, were the driving force of the genocide in the area:

I also recall that the Presidential Guard soldiers guarding Mr Z's house were under his orders and killed people in Gisenyi ... Protais [Z] also encouraged the Interahamwe who manned the roadblock just next to his house in Karago to kill Tutsis and moderate Hutus fleeing the massacres in Kigali. (NB this residence was close to Habyarimana's Gisenyi palace).

An example of how the roadblocks worked can be seen in the case of a certain Stanislas Simbizi, a moderate Hutu, who had been denounced as an RPF spy on radio RTLM. When Simbizi, who was attempting to flee to Zaire, arrived at the roadblock, he was stopped. According to Serushago:

Protais Zigiranyirazo arrived and told us (Interahamwe) that the individual in question was Stanislas Simbizi. He ordered us to take him away and kill him. Considering the influence Mr. Z had, it was out of the question to disobey him. Thomas Mugiraneza took Stanislas away in a black Hiace minibus to the red commune. Sometime later he returned to inform us an Interahamwe named Kivenge had hacked Stanislas to death with a machete. Protais Zigiranyirazo was still present at the roadblock when Thomas returned.

It was not just Tutsis and political opponents/moderates who were stopped at the roadblock – those manning it were also instructed to stop any regime soldiers who were fleeing the fighting against the RPF. Around one week after the erection of the roadblock by Z's home three gendarmes (policemen) arrived and were stopped. Those manning the barrier suspected the gendarmes had deserted their positions on the frontline. Around 9pm, Z's 14 year-old son called Jean-Marie Vianney Makiza, accompanied by a soldier and carrying a weapon he had taken from his father's house, arrived at the roadblock. After a brief conversation, Jean-Marie Vianney Makika shot the three gendarmes dead. Unlike the numerous Tutsis murdered here, this killing caused considerable unease among the soldiers and local inhabitants. In order to protect his son from any repercussions, Z summoned the *Interahamwe* at the roadblock who had witnessed the murders and ordered them to file a false report noting they had shot dead the gendarmes, not Z's son. The order and its subsequent carrying out – demanding men admit to murders they had not committed to protect Z's son – showed his clear authority over the militia and the community.

Outside another of Z's homes, this time in the exclusive Kiyovu district of Kigali, another roadblock/killing zone was established. Witnesses noted Z encouraged those manning the barriers to 'thoroughly check' the ID cards of those trying to pass, and ordered them to be supplied with food so they would not have to leave their duties. To have no ID or one that defined a person's ethnic group as Tutsi was an immediate death sentence. Such roadblocks outside Z's homes in Gisenyi/Kiyovu could not have operated without his explicit consent. Z made no effort to have them removed or for their personnel to be stopped/arrested for the savagery they perpetrated there.

Such was the ferocity and organised killing spree of Tutsis in Z's home region of Gisenyi and the surrounds that it became the first area of the country to become 'Tutsi-free'. A local businessman told an enquiring French journalist in June, 'We killed all of them (the Tutsi) in the beginning without much of a fuss'. By this time however, though the genocide had been thoroughly implemented, the fight against the RPF offensive was being lost. Ministers from the regime, the hate radio RTLM, and much of the remaining Rwandan armed forces (FAR), and *Interahamwe* had moved to Gisenyi as Kigali fell and the RPF pushed north.

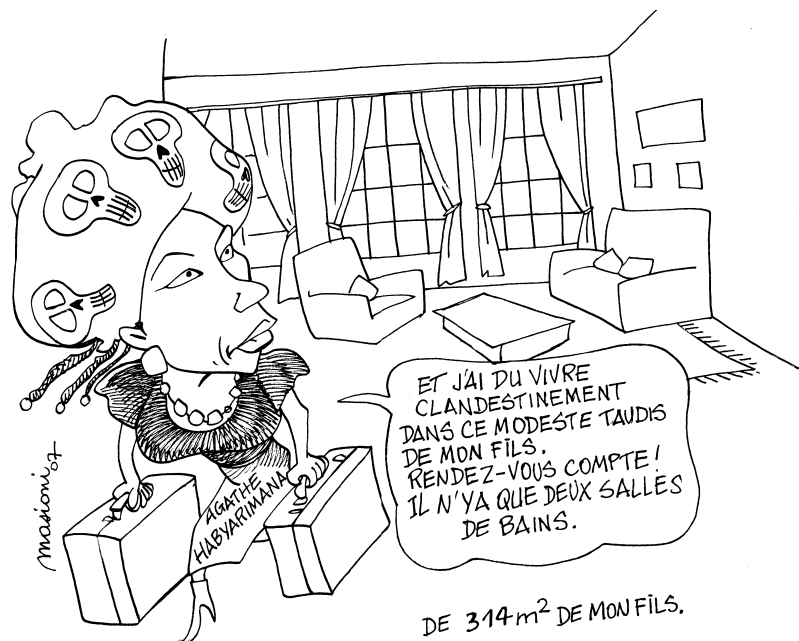
After the death of his mother, Z sent out 'requests' for the appropriate mourners to turn up to her funeral on the 6 June. These included the prime minister, Jean Kambanda, who later noted 'this is a man whom I could not not [sic] respond to when he called me. I was in his region. I had to respond, and so I did.' The phrase 'I was in his region' was highly significant coming as it did from the national prime minister and reflects that even the most (in theory) important person in the country was aware that Z was, in reality, actually the real power here. After the funeral, Z hosted a reception that included other ministers close to *Akazu*, including defence minister Augustin Bizimana. Within weeks, Z had driven across the border into Goma and had become a refugee – albeit a highly powerful and rich one, unlike the 1.5 million peasants who had been coerced by the regime and its defeated forces to flee from Rwanda as the RPF took control of the country.

Not wanting to stay with the mass of desperate people in the dire, disease-filled conditions of the refugee camps of Eastern Zaire, Z moved to Kenya and a lavish new home on Nairobi's Nyayo estate, in a part of the city where many of the wealthy and powerful former genocidal regime/*Akazu* also began to install themselves. Nearby neighbours of Z included his sister Agathe, as well as businessman and genocide-enabler Felicien Kabuga, recently expelled from Switzerland and his father-in-law Augustin Ndirabatware; former foreign minister of the genocidal regime Casimir Bizimungu and prime minister Jean Kambanda; the former army head Laurent Serubuga, Pascal 'the torturer' Simbikangwa, regime journalists like Hassan Ngese and Georges Ruggiu, genocidal prefects/bourgeois including Tharcisse Renzaho and businessmen such as Obed Ruzindana. The large, new Rwandan community would come together at mass each Sunday – the local churches suddenly hosting expensive cars and beautifully adorned people as they met up to consider present and future plans. Were they praying for a quick return to their homeland and an equally quick demise of the new government in Kigali and a 'finishing' of the genocide of the Tutsi?

Church and social life aside, the reality for Z was he was now stateless and the war/genocide had taken much of his business and property away. His major concern in the immediate months and years ahead was to find new streams of revenue and protect any old ones still remaining; to stave off the avaricious Kenyan police and their constant efforts to take financial advantage of the undocumented refugees; and work with others to plan a re-invasion of Rwanda to overthrow the new Kigali government. With this in mind Z travelled to and from the stinking refugee camps on the Zaire border to shore up support for the military-political establishment that had swiftly reordered the camps. In December 1995 he travelled to Libya to meet Col. Gaddafi to arrange arms shipments that the Rwandan forces in the camps badly needed. Using a fake Rwandan passport under the name of Mukiza Safari, he travelled with sister Agathe. Despite their best efforts – using Francophone dictators such as Bongo in Gabon and Mobutu in Zaire (DRC) - and numerous fundraising activities in Kenya and Zaire, the invasion never happened. The best that could be achieved was the launch of small-scale genocidal attacks into western Rwandan targeting Tutsis who had survived the 1994 horror and were now treated to further murderous pogroms.

While Z stayed in Kenya, his brother Seraphin had set himself up in Brussels despite on-going police investigations into his role with hate radio RTL and the *interahamwe*; his sister Agathe moved to Paris fulltime after a cosseted stay in Libreville courtesy of the Gabonese dictator Omar Bongo. Here she settled into a cosy multi-million Euro house in the suburb of Courcouronnes, despite her refugee status being denied over allegations that she was 'at the heart of the genocide.'

In early February 1998, using the mediation of the vice president of the *Interahamwe*, Goerges Rutaganda, a series of four meetings were arranged at the Nairobi Safari Club and Hilton Hotel between Z and investigators from the newly formed International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) based in Arusha, Tanzania. Z's motivation in taking part was to gauge the likelihood of criminal charges against him, and to use the UN Tribunal to push Canadian authorities to rescind its 1993 order to expel him. He still had assets in the country that he wanted to reclaim and a possible move there was feasible – one of Agathe's daughters had already started a new life there.



Nyabarongo, no 19, November 1994: 'Agathe Kanyiziga, a cruel mother who had babies, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly slaughtered.' The cartoon is a nod to the fabled merciless and murderous Rwandan queen Kanjogera who had stopped at nothing to gain power for herself and her family in the 1980s. Parallels with Agathe were widespread in Rwanda. Right: Bakchich.info, 29 January 2007: Agathe, wearing a trademark hat featuring an insignia of skulls, protests angrily after noting at her hearing before the French refugee commission (OFPRA) that she was purely an innocent grieving widow just 'trying to survive' in her multi-million Euro house. The commission and later council of state found in their rulings that she, along with Z and Akazu, were 'at the heart of the genocide.'

Z's name had appeared prominently on lists of suspected *genocidaire* produced by the newly formed Rwandan government. It meant he was having to travel with a fake passport and it was hindering his wish to travel to Europe, Canada and even around Kenya where he and his wife and four of his children were based. Moreover, Z still claimed the right to certain expensive properties in Europe and Rwanda, including a building in Kigali where the US embassy was housed. He produced a 'CV' for the ICTR investigators to prove his 'innocence' though looking through it, the prosecutors noted not only numerous untruths but that the document, far from exonerating Z, gave rise to some highly significant questions as to his criminal responsibility in the genocide.

Time was certainly running out for Z in Kenya. As the ICTR began to make arrests among the Rwandan exiles, it became clear there was no future left in the country. Z's failing efforts to promote the Hutu cause - along with those still left such as Casimir Bizimungu, former prefect Tharcisse Renzaho, Anglican Bishop Samuel Musabyimana, former minister of public works in the interim regime Hyacinthe Rafiki and Michel Bagaragaza, the highly enriched former head of Rwanda tea - came to nothing.

At 11.20am on the 26 July 2001, Z was arrested while already detained at Melsbroek transit centre 127 at Brussels airport, a facility for undocumented migrants and administered by the office of foreign nationals in Belgium. He had flown into Brussels on 3 June using the alias Monsieur Protais Laurent with his 14 year-old son Aloys Niyimana on his way to his final destination of Paris to meet his family, sister Agathe and a relaxed retirement from his crimes - and justice. Unfortunately for him, Z's passport was noted to be a rather poor forgery by Belgian airport officials. Z had then tried another track - admitting to be a certain 'Protais Mujiza Safari' and asking for political asylum, at which point he had been moved to the Melsbroek centre while his case was investigated. Here he was recognised by other asylum seekers, who informed the authorities.

Z's sudden discovery in Brussels was both good and bad news for the ICTR. The good news: it had suddenly been advised the whereabouts of a notable genocide suspect was not just known but that he was in temporary custody. In the three years since Z's initial meetings with ICTR investigators in 1998 he had gone from being seen as a 'person of interest' to a 'person wanted for genocide'. The bad news: Z's unexpected detention took everyone by surprise and led to a frantic legal scramble by the ICTR and Belgian authorities. Witnesses - including 'insiders' such as the former Prime Minister Kambanda, *Interahamwe* leader in Gisenyi Omar Serushago, Michel Bagaragaza and former communications minister Christophe Mfizi had all implicated Z. Despite this, in this intervening period (1998-2001), an indictment had not been produced. Now one was

urgently needed to allow for Z's transferral to the tribunal in Arusha. The prosecution were faced with scrabbling around trying to work out specific charges to make against Z in an indictment before the Belgian authorities had to release the would-be asylum seeker/genocide suspect.

Just in time, a piecemeal indictment was drawn up and swiftly rubber-stamped by the judges in Arusha, but it was clearly rushed and error-strewn. Over the coming months and years it would be amended three times as new facts and witnesses were found. It was far from a promising start for the trial of one of the key figures not just of 1994, but of the period dating back to the 1973 coup and the many crimes since then. However, under its UN mandate, the ICTR could only bring charges relating to acts committed during 1994. The many victims of Z in those earlier years – 1973-93 where he had effective immunity - undoubtedly hoped that justice would be done even if it was not for those crimes that Z had perpetrated against them and their families.

On Monday, 3rd October 2005, Z's trial, case ICTR-2001-73-T, finally began before trial chamber III of the ICTR in Arusha. It was four years to the day since he had been transferred to the UN Detention Facilities from Belgium. Over the following three years the trial continued. Unlike most other accused at the ICTR such as the architect of the genocide Theoneste Bagosora, Z refused to take the stand and testify – his legal team perhaps concerned how the accused would react under cross-examination from the prosecutor. Instead, the court heard from a variety of witnesses, including Michel Bagaragaza, the former head of Rwanda tea and a leading *Akazu* figure who turned prosecution witness and pleaded guilty in order to gain himself a (much) shorter sentence. Other witnesses who took the stand included one of Z's wives, Domitilla, Habyarimana's son Jean-Luc, his brother Seraphin, *Interahamwe* leaders Omar Serushago and Georges Rutaganda, Christophe Mfizi and a number of genocide survivors.

On 18 December 2008 the trial judges pronounced Z guilty of genocide and extermination as a crime against humanity, notably by 'participating in a joint criminal enterprise executed on Kesho hill on 8 April 1994, when many hundreds, possibly over 1,000, Tutsi victims were killed, with the use of guns, grenades, and traditional weapons,' and for having aided and abetted the *Interahamwe* in their murderous 'work' at the roadblock by his home in Kiyovu in Kigali. Z was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. Both prosecution and defence immediately announced they would appeal.



Z listens intently as the trial judges find him guilty of genocide and extermination, ICTR, 18 December 2008. courtesy of UNICTR

Eleven months later on 16 November 2009, and back in court number 3, Judge Theodor Meron, head of the ICTR appeal bench, read out a short but shocking verdict. Having looked at the trial judgement again he and his two fellow appeal judges decided there were serious flaws in the legal case that had led to the former prefect being found guilty. Z was acquitted. Meron ruled that it was not up to Z to prove *his* alibi beyond a reasonable doubt - but up to the prosecution to prove *its* case beyond reasonable doubt. Any alibi by Z, even if only 'reasonably possibly true' should have been accepted by the trial judges. Since Z had witnesses such as Jean Luc Habyarimana and President Habyarimana's brother Seraphim Bararengana who gave him that 'possible' alibi

that he was still in Kigali when the massacre at Kesho hill began, this was enough to reverse the trial verdict and acquit him. It was a quite remarkable and unforeseen turn of events that left even the defence speechless. As Z walked free into the Arusha sunshine, survivors were left to fulminate against a rushed, underdone prosecution and a reinterpretation of the legal application regarding an alibi by Meron's appeal bench. After a hugely expensive and lengthy trial and appeal, international justice had spectacularly failed to prove what everyone already knew. Z was guilty.

In the homeland he had fled from after the 1994 genocide, the reaction to the appeal ruling was incredulity. Those who lived in Ruhengeri under 'Monsieur Z' in the 1970s and 80s, or had come across him in the early 1990s and during the genocide knew only too well the ICTR had got this very badly wrong. In terms of legal proceedings Z may have had his conviction quashed. In terms of the reality of the crimes he had committed over 30 years, he had got away with (mass) murder. The Belgian legal expert Eric Gillet had personally taken part in investigating ethnic massacres in the early 1990s. He commented after the verdict: 'Of course, the allegations on these two incidents [Kesho Hill and Kiyovu] may not be proved; but everyone who knows the history understands that the involvement of 'Mr Z' in the genocide is not limited to his presence on two specific incidents during the genocide. These two events, as in other cases judged by the ICTR, are only the tip of the iceberg.' Rwandan deputy prosecutor Martin Ngoga was just as direct when he told the media: 'whatever procedural mistakes were made, the verdict is deeply disappointing. If "Monsieur Z" could be found innocent how is anyone going to be found guilty? This decision attacks the very roots of trying to find justice for the genocide.'

This case was to be a harbinger of things to come. The elderly Judge Meron was to continue over the coming years to acquit or slash the sentences of numerous *genocidaire* previously found guilty like Z after lengthy trials; In later cases, both at the ICTR and ICTY in The Hague, the appeal bench he presided over made a series of highly controversial judgements, stemming from his interpretation of 'superior command' – effectively raising the burden of proof to such an extent that, as one well-placed Balkan commentator told the Economist magazine 'Adolf Hitler might very well have been cleared of his responsibility for the Holocaust if he had been judged using the standards that the UN tribunal in The Hague was now applying. ... This is not justice. This is blindness'.

For Z, it was one thing to be hugged in delight by your defence lawyer in court when Meron pronounced the verdict - but in the eyes of the world he was a man very much guilty of genocide. Z immediately began to apply for visas to head to Europe to rejoin his many children and wife in Belgium and France, or even Canada. Over the coming 16 years the French and Belgian governments repeatedly refused to allow Z his wish. France continued to host Z's sister Agathe and Belgium gave Z's brother Seraphin Rwabukumba – also under longtime investigation for genocide - unofficial 'permission' to remain. But having Z on their soil was clearly one step too far.

He was seen as a public relations disaster waiting to happen should he arrive. As with other *genocidaire* Meron released early such as Col. Anatole Nsengiyumva, Z's companion in the murder of Gisenyi's Tutsis, life became a daily round of heading around the bars, cafes and shops of Arusha, in effect as paid UN employees. Living in their luxury whitewashed 'safe house' – previously home to the ICTR registrar, all expenses paid for such as health care, transport, and accommodation, life was not so bad. The former Ruhengeri prefect could be seen most days back at the ICTR in the library, reading the newspapers and scowling at any prosecution lawyer who happened to pass through while showing his most charming smile to the pretty young female interns and court assistants whom he ran into in the sprawling building. The young wife of a Rwandan prosecution lawyer was highly surprised to be propositioned by Z while in an elevator; it seemed he did not realise who she was or that his legendary charm was, in this instance, totally pointless.

Three years after his release, on 20 January 2012, Z issued a claim for substantial damages of more than \$1 million from the ICTR, citing his 'long detention', 'violations of the most fundamental principles of justice' by the [Trial Chamber] in convicting him and failure to ensure he was returned to Belgium after release, as well as for 'moral damages.' His legal team demanded that Belgium admit Z back onto its territory within two weeks and for his lawyers to get full costs for their time drawing up the claim. In December 2012, Z's compensation claim was dismissed by the ICTR, and his demand that the court had a duty to relocate him to Belgium was thrown out as 'frivolous'.

For the next decade, Z's life consisted of living among an ever-growing number of former *genocidaire* in the Arusha 'safe house'. With Judge Meron in the Appeal court cutting sentences, granting early release and overturning trial guilty verdicts, the 'safe house' was soon packed out and further expensive UN accommodation was acquired to house this motley group of Rwandans. The former political, military, media

and administrative members of the Rwandan genocidal regime, now all living under one roof made for an interesting existence. Many, like Z, were denied their wish to join families in France/Belgium though others were allowed to do so.

One of the few highlights for those former detainees now free was when they returned to the tribunal to attend appeal judgements. Here they would sit, *en masse*, along the back row in the glass-fronted public gallery – a boisterous, noisy and highly partisan group shouting their support to the defendants in the court room on the other side of the partition. When Meron, with regularity, pronounced he was overturning yet another verdict on appeal – whether it was Justin Mugenzi and Prosper Mugiraneza (both sentenced to 35 years originally), or a mass murderer like Anatole Nsengiyumva who had his life sentence slashed to 15 years and was then freed immediately for time served, Z and his comrades would jump to their feet to salute their fellow accused with clenched fists, beaming smiles and loud cheers. It was a highly unsettling and grim spectacle. Later, those newly released would be treated to a party with champagne, dancing and long speeches that denied any genocide had occurred and any responsibility for ‘massacres.’



Home sweet (UN) home in Arusha: – the ‘secure’ villa that was Z’s luxury, rent-free accommodation along with other released former ICTR detainees. For more than a decade (2009-2022) Z lived here while trying furiously to get a visa to France, Belgium or Canada.

With the UN Mechanism [UNIRMCT] taking over the role of ‘looking after’ the residents of the safe house after the closure of the ICTR in 2015, the question of what should happen to them long term was one of some concern. With the closure of the UN detention facilities and the handing back of the tribunal premises – which moved to a multi-million premises just outside the town - getting the residents of the safe house moved on was imperative. In 15 November 2021 the UN and the government of Niger reached an agreement for the remaining 8 occupants in Arusha (François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye, Prosper Mugiraneza, Protais Zigiranyirazo, Anatole Nsengiyumva, Alphonse Nteziryayo, Tharcisse Muvunyi, André Ntagerura, and Innocent Sagahutu) to be flown to its capital Niamey to live in a safe house there, pending further relocation. On 8 December they were flown to Niamey – Z’s first trip abroad since his ill-fated effort to get to Belgium 20 years previously.

All was not well in Niger from the start. Within two weeks the Niger government ordered the 8 men to be leave the country – despite them being very much *persona non grata* anywhere else – except Rwanda where they refused to return. The reasons for Niger’s sudden change of mind when it came to hosting the former UN detainees was not given but there followed a frantic legal and political tussle with the Mechanism being inundated with demands from the men – including Z - to allow them to remain in Niamey at full cost to the UN until another state would accept them. While the government in Niger did finally assent to the 8 remaining, it ordered them to hand over identity documents and to stay within the confines of the UN-funded ‘safe house’ in the capital city. In December 2021 the UN paid Z – and the other seven - \$10,000 for ‘welfare’ costs, stating they had a ‘duty of care’ to them. This was repeated in the following years. In effect, Z had become a UN employee – the Mechanism, like the ICTR before, judging that its ‘duty of care’ to these individuals meant it had to pay for their housing, medical fees, welfare costs etc. even when they were free. Meanwhile the victims and their families from 1973-94 received little – if any – UN assistance. However, despite repeated legal challenges by Z and his fellow Rwandans in Niger to force France/Belgium or another country of choice to take them in, the impasse continued. Even a rumoured move to the DRC in 2024 failed to materialise

In the event, time ran out for Z. Despite restrictions being lifted by the Niger authorities in 2025 to allow greater movement, Z would end his days as an outcast.

On 15 July 2025, 87 year-old Z was admitted to the *Hôpital Général de Référence* in Niamey. This modern, Chinese-financed and built 500-bed hospital, is feted as being the best in the country. On 29 July, two weeks after being admitted, Z was sent back to his UN home. He died at 9pm on 3 August, according to his son Antoine Mukiza Zigiranyirazo who announced the event.



Hôpital Général de Référence in Niamey

However, the sorry tale of Monsieur Z continued even after his death. Unusually, the Niger government did not inform its Rwandan counterpart of the death of one of its nationals. An investigation by the magazine *Jeune Afrique* showed how Z's family had outsmarted the French authorities so that though they had barred Z from the country when he was alive, now deceased, his body was effectively 'smuggled' into the country – using a Turkish Airlines flight via Ankara, and then a second flight to Paris. By using this route via Turkey – which is signed up to a 1973 agreement allowing for simplified arrangements relating to the transfer of a body between signatory countries, Z's arrival did not alert French diplomatic or border customs authorities. Showing impressive forward planning, in a death notice for their 'much loved father' which was widely circulated on social media, it was announced that a requiem mass would be held at St. Patern's Church, Rue Banner, Orleans at 11am on 28 August, followed by a burial at the Grand Cemetery in the city, with a 'celebration' of Z's life afterwards.

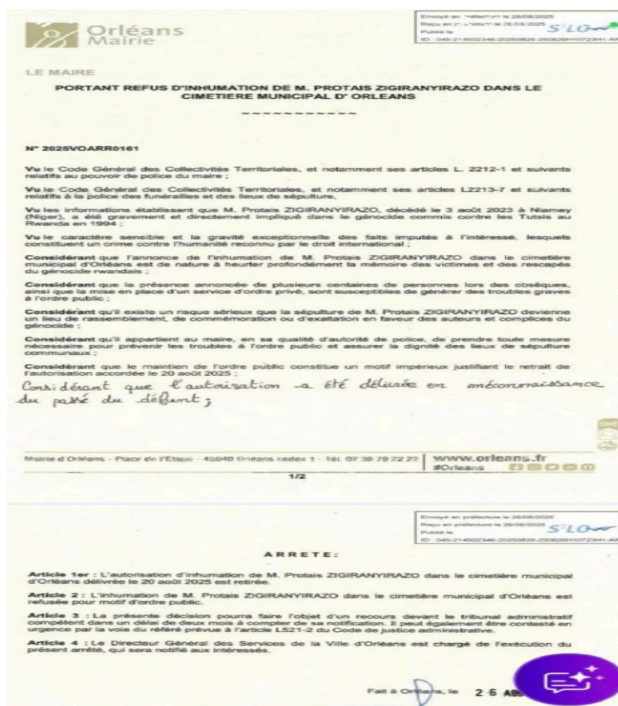
The public notice was picked up by genocide survivor groups. On 24 August, the Collectif des Parties Civiles pour le Rwanda (CPCR) published a statement expressing its 'astonishment' that Z's funeral was about to take place in France. Alain Gauthier, the president of the CPCR who has worked tirelessly to force French authorities to bring *genocidaire* to justice in France, wrote angrily: 'We consider that the scheduled gathering of *genocidaires* on August 28 constitutes an affront to the prestigious memory of Orléans, the city of Joan of Arc and Jean Zay'. The genocide survivor support group IBUKA issued a press release noting the burial showed 'a disturbing lack of consideration for the memory of the victims ... It is completely incomprehensible that France, which closed its doors to him during his lifetime, should now agree to receive his remains.' It added there was a real danger the cemetery could become a 'gathering place for those nostalgic for the genocidal regime ... France, given its history and its commitment to remembrance, justice, and truth, should leave it to other nations to take responsibility for receiving the remains of ICTR prisoners.'

Two days before the promised service and burial, the Mayor of Orleans, Monsieur Serge Grouard, impressively stepped into the controversy by temporarily withdrawing permission for the event. He cited issues around public order – notably that given Z's serious and direct culpability in the genocide of the Tutsi and very serious crimes against humanity, the burial risked profoundly upsetting victims and survivors of the genocide, while becoming a shrine for those who wished to uphold the crime. An appeal by the family against the mayor's decision was heard and dismissed in a six-page judgement two days later on 28 August by the judge of the city's administrative court – the day the funeral and burial had been scheduled. It noted 'The mayor of Orléans could,

without error of law or assessment, rely on Protais Zigiranyirazo’s serious and direct involvement in the Rwandan genocide in its refusal of permission to bury him’ and that there were ‘proven risks of disturbances to public order resulting both from the burial of the deceased in the municipal cemetery and from the possible creation of a memorial site’. The bishop of Orleans, Monsigneur Jacques Blaquart, announced that he would not conduct the funeral mass for Z in the beautiful, historic Church of Saint Paterne as the family had expected, noting there should be no Eucharist celebrated or testimonies given at any eventual funeral service. Though everyone who died has the right to receive a prayer for the salvation of their soul, the bishop announced his thoughts and prayers were with the victims of the genocide, and insisted on the importance of repentance and individual responsibilities.

The decision was appealed again – this time to the Conseil d’etat. It ruled that the previous decisions to refuse permission for Z to be buried in Orleans Grand cemetery was lawful. Since this decision, the family have come up with another ‘secret’ solution to the problem. Z, it seems, has been buried but the family are now very tight-lipped about where this has taken place. It seems they have learned that publicity when burying a genocidaire is not always such a good thing. Even their lawyer, the usually effusive Philippe Meilhac – also the longtime attorney of Z’s sister Agathe Habyarimana – has refused to talk about the lasting resting place for Z.

This whole sorry tale mirrors that of Z’s brother-in-law, President Juvenal Habyarimana. After his death when his plane was shot down on 6 April 1994 Habyarimana’s body was recovered from the flower beds in his own palace garden. It was then carted around Rwanda and Zaire with no one quite sure how and where to bury him: his corpse was moved from the military camp morgue in Kanombe, Kigali to a fridge in the Rubaya tea factory, the freezer in the Bralirwa beer works near Gisenyi, then across the border into a Goma hotel fridge, a Kinshasha hospital morgue, the presidential palace crypt in Gbadolite until finally it was cremated in Kinshasha.



Left: 26 August 2025: The mayor of Orleans, Serge Grouard, issued a temporary ban on Z being buried in the grand municipal cemetery while the funeral service for Z booked by his family (right:) in the beautiful and historic Église Saint-Paterne was also put on hold with the bishop of Orleans, Jacques André Blaquart, issuing a response to the Z’s family in which he refused to conduct the service as they had hoped.



Left: The entrance to the Grand Cemetery in Orleans where Z's family want to bury the former Ruhengeri prefect, in an equally grand grave among the great and good of the city. Right: the remains of hundreds Tutsi genocide victims recovered from a pit where they were thrown by their killers – no identification is possible. The grieving of their relatives will last a lifetime.

In Rwanda, the bodies of those murdered in 1994 – and in the years before then by the Habyarimana regime and Akazu, - are still being found 30+ years later, having been thrown into pit latrines, buried under buildings and left to rot in fields and ditches. Tens of thousands of families still grieve without the physical remains of their loved one ever recovered and given a decent burial.

Z's life remains a salutary lesson to those who wish to learn how such voracious greed for money and power can lead to the destruction of lives all around them. Did Z ever indulge in a moment of regret for the pain and suffering his actions caused? Did he have any self-awareness of the flaws in his character that led him to a path of genocide and extermination of his fellow Rwandans? His life is a cautionary tale of how absolute power corrupts absolutely. His lasting memorial will be his many bloody crimes from 1973-1994, each with a terrible individual human cost. Only for this he should be remembered.

For more information about Z's life and crimes, see:

ICTR – trial transcripts and judgement, and appeal judgement can be searched for/read via the UNIRMCT (Mechanism) website at <https://ucr.irmct.org>

NB: many of the testimonies at the trial were heavily redacted or came from protected witnesses such as Michel Bagaragaza, Omar Serushago etc. Equally important documents and expert reports are also not fully available which is highly unfortunate. It does not help in allowing for the transparency of justice or the ongoing fight against genocide denial.

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