

In the late 1950s, during the great wave of decolonisation, Rwanda experienced an exacerbation of social tensions and ethnic violence, which continued once the country gained its independence from Belgium in 1962.

In August 1993, thanks to the peacemaking efforts of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the region's governments, the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement seemed to end the conflict (begun in 1990) between the then Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In October 1993, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) with a mandate to maintain peace, provide humanitarian assistance and generally support the peace process.

On 6 April 1994, the death of the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda in an air crash caused by missile fire, triggered the genocide against the Tutsis, which had been under preparation for several months. It is estimated that around 1 million victims were murdered. Less than half an hour after the plane crashed, roadblocks controlled by Hutu militia, often assisted by the gendarmerie or military personnel, were set up to identify and kill Tutsis.

On 7 April, Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) broadcasted a programme attributing the responsibility for the plane crash to the RPF and Belgian UNAMIR soldiers, and began to encourage Hutus to eliminate the "Tutsi cockroaches". Later that day, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and the ten Belgian peacekeepers protecting her were brutally murdered by Rwandan Government soldiers. Belgium decided to withdraw all its peacekeepers following the massacre of its soldiers.

6 April, 20h30: The plane arriving at Kigali Airport, carrying Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira is shot down by surface- to-air missiles, killing also two Burundian Ministers, the Chief of Staff of the Rwandan Army, members of the cabinet and the French crew. The ceasefire abruptly ends. Rumors are spread that the Belgians shot down the plane of the President.

22h00: A crisis committee is set up. General Romeo Dallaire, the Force Commander of UNAMIR goes to attend the meeting and finds Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, the chief of staff of the Minister of Defense, in charge. The proposal to let Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, normally next in line of succession, address the nation, is rejected.

7 April, 01h18: Nevertheless, on order of General Dallaire, the UNAMIR Sector Commander for Kigali, Colonel Luc Marchal, instructs Belgian 2nd Commando Battalion to escort the Prime Minister to Radio Rwanda and to secure the site. She is supposed to address the nation at 05h30. Lieutenant-colonel Joseph Dewez, Battalion commander, expresses his doubts about this mission in this very tense environment.

02h16: Lieutenant Thierry Lotin from the Mortar Platoon of 2nd Commando Battalion, who is refueling his two jeeps at the airport, is ordered to execute this mission. He is to take four jeeps (double of a normal patrol).

03h19: On route to execute the mission, Lieutenant Lotin is stopped at a roadblock only 1 kilometer away from the house of the Prime Minister. He loses valuable time negotiating and waiting for a Rwandan Liaison officer who never shows up.

05h12: Eventually Lieutenant Lotin is guided on another route. In the city sporadic gunfire is heard all around.

05h42: The jeeps of the Mortar Platoon arrive at their objective. The men link up with five Ghanaian soldiers of UNAMIR and five Rwandan gendarmes, the security detail of the Prime

Minister. Immediately after, Rwandan soldiers with armored vehicles and Presidential Guards surround their position and open fire on the house.

05h47: Lieutenant Lotin reports on his situation. The escort mission to the Radio station is cancelled. The squad of Lieutenant Lotin does not return fire, as they recon the Rwandan soldiers are not firing at them. Lieutenant-colonel Dewez also advises them not to do so.

06h03: The squad reports that its jeeps are destroyed.

06h55: The Rwandan soldiers order the squad to lay down their weapons and surrender. Lieutenant-colonel Dewez advises Lieutenant Lotin not to do so, but to negotiate.

07h00: A Company commander from 2nd Commando, about two kilometers away from the house of the Prime Minister, proposes to intervene with a reinforced platoon. Battalion Command rejects the proposal.

07h40: The Prime Minister takes refuge in a neighboring house, escorted by the gendarmes. Later (11h45) she and her husband will be discovered by a Presidential Guard unit and executed.

08h44: Lieutenant Lotin reports on the very aggressive posture of the Rwandan soldiers surrounding him. 2nd

Commando Battalion requests directives from Colonel Marchal, who is listening in on the Battalion frequency.

08h49: Lieutenant-colonel Dewez repeats to the squad not to lay down their weapons, but it is too late: four of the men are already disarmed and immobilized on the ground. Lieutenant Lotin surrenders with approval of Battalion and Sector Command.

Both the Belgian squad and the Ghanaian soldiers are taken prisoner by Major Bernard Ntuyahaga from the Headquarters of the Rwandan Army. They are transported in a minivan to a "secure location".

Around 09h00 they arrive at Camp Kigali, a Rwandan military compound, only a short distance away.

On arrival Lieutenant Lotin manages to link up with Captain Kodjo Apedo, at the nearby guardhouse. The Captain is a Togolese UNAMIR liaison officer in the Camp.

At the same moment Major Ntuyahaga spreads the rumor that his Belgian prisoners are those who shot down the President's plane. He incites the Rwandan soldiers present. The mob, armed with clubs, rocks and rifles start beating and lynching the unarmed prisoners.

09h06: The Lieutenant is able to contact his higher echelon one last time to inform on his predicament, using the radio from the Togolese Captain.

09h08: Lieutenant-colonel Dewez requests Sector Command for support to intervene. Colonel Marchal informs a member of General Dallaire's staff and proposes to address this issue with Rwandan's leaders during a scheduled meeting for 10h00.

In the meantime, four of Lieutenant Lotin's men do not survive the beatings and bayonet charges.

The others, heavily injured, break free from the mob and manage to join him in the UN duty room. They barricade in the guard house and start fighting for their lives.

The mutiny in Camp Kigali is complete when the Rwandan soldiers break into the weapon storage to arm themselves. The guard house falls under heavy fire, and another Belgian Para-Commando is killed.

During a pause in the attack, Captain Apedo and the five Ghanaian soldiers are extracted from the guard house.

Just before 10h00: General Dallaire leaves his headquarters to join the meeting. It will take him an hour to arrive. He is made aware of an incident taking place, involving Belgian UNAMIR soldiers.

10h40: When one Rwandan soldier wants to enter the guard house, he is disarmed and killed by Lieutenant Lotin who was allowed to keep his pistol. Gunshots are exchanged. Some Rwandan soldiers get injured and killed.

10h50: On the way to his meeting, General Dallaire passes in front of the gate at Camp Kigali, only 30 meters away from the incident. He sees bodies of UNAMIR soldiers lying on the ground. He wants to stop the car, but his Rwandan driver refuses, telling him it is unsafe as a mutiny is ongoing.

10h55: General Dallaire arrives at the meeting site, only 200 meters away from the incident, where he meets Captain Apedo and the Ghanaian soldiers, who had been allowed to leave the compound. They inform him of what is going on in Camp Kigali. Surprisingly General Dallaire does not take any initiative to deal with this situation. During the following meeting which lasts up to 12h15, he does not even mention the incident. As he mentioned in his book *Shake Hands with the Devil*: "He was trying to grasp the situation".

Around 13h00: Teargas and explosive grenades are thrown through a hole in the roof. It makes an end to the heroic resistance of the Belgian Para-commando's.

In the afternoon their pillaged and mutilated bodies are evacuated to Kigali Hospital morgue and piled up without respect. In the evening General Dallaire "visited" the hospital. He could not tell how many of his soldiers had perished.

Source: Belgian parliamentary commission of inquiry

Security Council Resolution 872 established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) on 5 October 1993 to help implement the Arusha Peace Agreement signed by the Rwandese parties on 4 August 1993.

• UNAMIR'S ORIGINAL MANDATE:

- to assist in ensuring the security of the capital city - monitor the ceasefire agreement, including establishment of an expanded demilitarized zone and demobilization procedures of Kigali;
- monitor the security situation during the final period of the transitional Government's mandate leading up to elections; - assist with mine-clearance and assist in the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities in conjunction with relief operations.

UN

DURATION: October 1993-March 1996

Authorized STRENGTH (5 October 1993-20 April 1994): 2,548 military personnel, including 2,217 formed troops, 331 military observers and 60 civilian police; supported by international and locally recruited civilian staff.

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HEADS OF MISSION:

Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh (Cameroon) Shaharyar M. Khan (Pakistan) July 1994-March 1996

November 1993-June 1994

FORCE COMMANDER:

Major-General Romeo A. Dallaire (Canada) October 1993-August 1994

POLICE COMMISSIONER:

Colonel Manfred Bliem (Austria) December 1993-April 1994

CONTRIBUTORS OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN

POLICE PERSONNEL: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bra- zil, Canada, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Switzerland, Togo, Tuni- sia, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

With over 400 troops, Belgium was one of the major troop contributors within the UNAMIR.

In June 1999, an independent investigation into the actions taken by the United Nations during the 1994 genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda was launched under the aegis of Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The main conclusions drawn from the report highlight:

- a lack of resources and willingness on the part of the United Nations to carry out the actions needed to prevent or stop the genocide;
- the fact that UNAMIR was not planned, deployed, trained or the appropriate size to play a firm and pro- active role following the threat to the peace process;
- the fact that UNAMIR's mandate was not adequate for preventing or stopping the genocide;
- the existence of confusion and mix-ups regarding the rules of engagement;
- the existence of organisational problems within UNAMIR on the one hand and UN headquarters on the other.

What is the Crime of Genocide?

According to Article II of the "United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide", adopted on 9 December 1948, the crime of genocide:

Means any of the following acts, committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The international community's attention to the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide therefore remains essential in order to "free humanity from such an odious scourge".

According to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2150 (adopted unanimously in 2014) on the prevention of and fight against genocide, the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda took the lives of approximately one million people in 100 days. Hutus and others who opposed to the genocide were also killed during the genocide against the Tutsis.

Belgium mourns 22 victims - ten peacekeepers responsible for the protection of Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana (also killed) and 12 civilians, murdered primarily because they were Belgian.

• Role of Hate Media:

Belgians were presented as accomplices of the RPF or responsible for the assassination of President Habyarimana, and were one of the nationalities particularly targeted by "hate media" propaganda, especially the sinister Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) and the newspaper Kangura.

Belgium's role & Consequences:

In April 1997, the Belgian Senate decided to open a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda. The conclusions of this report mainly underline a collective responsibility: "The commission is convinced that, in addition to Rwandan officials, the political and military authorities in Belgium, the United Nations and the international community as a whole are directly or indirectly responsible for certain aspects of the dramatic events in Rwanda after 6 April 1994. (...) It is a combination of circumstances, negligence, poor evaluations and also mistakes that led to the tragedy."

In his historic speech on 7 April 2000 during the 6th commemoration of the Tutsi genocide, held in Kigali, Guy Verhofstadt (then Prime Minister) acknowledged Belgium's responsibilities towards the Rwandans in the 1994 genocide:

In the name of my country, I pay tribute to the genocide victims And in the name of my country, my people, I beg ask for forgiveness.

NEVER AGAIN/PLUS JAMAIS

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Following the genocide against the Tutsis, the Rwandan judiciary, which had been greatly weakened during the conflict, was not in a position to ensure that the alleged perpetrators of the genocide received a full trial (with more than 120,000 suspects arrested, the judiciary only had the capacity to judge around one thousand per year).

Belgium has contributed to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), established by the United Nations (November 1994 - December 2015) and based in Arusha, Tanzania. In addition to the figures (61 people convicted), which have been criticised, the ICTR provided an opportunity to seek the truth and fight impunity as a catalyst for peace-building in Rwanda.

To speed up the procedures and thus make the national reconciliation process a reality, the Rwandan government set up "Gacaca courts", which are a system of community justice based on traditional practices. After handling 1,958,634 cases, the Gacaca courts were officially closed on 18 June 2012.

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Belgium is determined to persevere in the fight against impunity and played a pioneering role as the first foreign country to try and convict Rwandan genocide perpetrators on its territory.

Indeed, several sentences for crimes committed in Rwanda in 1994 were handed down by Belgian national courts based on the principle of the mandatory universal jurisdiction of national courts for serious violations of international humanitarian law, including:

- the trial known as the "Butare Four": Alphonse Higaniro, Vincent Ntezimana, Consolata Mukangango and Julienne Mukabutera, arrested on Belgian territory for involvement in the massacres in the Butare prefecture between April and July 1994. They were convicted by a criminal court (Cour d'assises) of Brussels on 8 June 2001 and sentenced to between 12 and 20 years' imprisonment.

- the trial of Bernard Ntuyahaga: Bernard Ntuyahaga, a former Major in the Rwandan Armed Forces, was sentenced on 5 July 2007 by a criminal court (Cour d'assises) of Brussels to 20 years' imprisonment for the murder of the ten Belgian peacekeepers, Rwandan Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and many Rwandans, mainly in the Kigali and Butare prefectures. After spending 20 years in prison in Belgium, Bernard Ntuyahaga was deported to Rwanda in December 2018.

Other trials against alleged genocide perpetrators are ongoing.

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Remembering the Past - Building the Future

The genocide against the Tutsis, which deeply scarred everyone living in Rwanda during that period, was one of the worst man-made crimes of the 20th century.

The "new generation", born after the genocide and comprising just over half of Rwanda's population in 2019, nevertheless embodies the country's strength and future. It is the responsibility of this generation to build Rwanda's future.

Moreover, although this generation is affected in a different way by the genocide and its stigmas, it also has a crucial role to play in terms of memory and reconciliation work.

The Government of Rwanda, which has great ambitions for the country's youth, is therefore granting a lot of attention to the promotion of national unity and reconciliation. These efforts are, by and large, supported by the international community.