

## Rwanda: Documents Shed New Light on Genocide Planning

Human Rights Watch

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### Use of Civilian 'Self-Defense' Militias Revealed on Anniversary of Massacres

(New York) -- Organizers of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda used a "civilian self-defense system" to mobilize participants in the campaign to exterminate the Tutsi minority, Human Rights Watch said in a briefing paper released today.

The 17-page paper, "The Rwandan Genocide: How It Was Prepared," ( <http://hrw.org/backgrounders/africa/rwanda0406/> ) draws on previously unpublished documents to lay out the way the extermination system was planned in the months before the genocide was launched, 12 years ago this week.

"Genocidal violence did not just break out as a result of fear or hatred of the Tutsi minority," said Alison Des Forges, senior adviser to the Africa division at Human Rights Watch. "It was launched by military, administrative, and political authorities using the machinery of the state."

The paper relates how officials and propagandists defined Tutsi civilians as the "enemy" to be targeted by "self-defense" efforts. It also summarizes the context of the genocide, which began in early April 1994, including poverty, land scarcity, colonial rule, the introduction of multi-party politics and the war.

"Documenting the genocide is also a way of honoring its victims," said Des Forges. "The more we understand the preparation and implementation of a genocide, the more we will be able to avert similar horrors in the future."

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