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Canadian Court Hears Genocide Testimony in Rwanda

KIGALI, Rwanda — A specially-convened Canadian court began hearing witness testimony in Rwanda on Monday against a man facing charges in Canada of participating in the 1994 genocide.

Desire Munyaneza was arrested by Canadian police in October 2005 and charged with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Rwanda during the massacres, in which some 800,000 people died.

The legal proceedings were conducted in a room at Rwanda's Supreme Court in Kigali, but Munyaneza will be tried in Canada.

Rwanda's ethnic massacres mostly targeted minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Soldiers and militias of the then Hutu-led government have been accused of orchestrating the carnage.

Munyaneza, accused of multiple rape and murder in Rwanda's southern Butare province, fled to Canada in 1996 and claimed refugee status. At the time of his arrest he was living in Toronto with his wife and two children.

Canadian prosecutor Pascale Ledoux said the unusual decision to hear witnesses overseas was fully in accordance with Canadian law.

The 20-strong Canadian team, which includes court clerks and interpreters, will hear evidence from at least 10 witnesses.

The current Rwandan government insists dozens of key planners of the slaughter still remain at large in Europe and North America despite a repeated call to have them arrested.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, based in Arusha, Tanzania, has convicted 27 people and acquitted five suspects since its first trial in 1997.

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