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Rwandan Ex-UN Employee Accused of Genocide Refuses to Face Justice at Home

SYDNEY — A former UN employee accused of taking part in Rwanda's 1994 genocide denied the charges during a rare interview Wednesday, but said he will never agree to return to his homeland to face justice.

Callixte Mbarushimana told Australia's SBS television that witnesses who claim they saw him either killing or supervising in the killings of members of the Tutsi tribe while he worked for the UN Development Programme were lying.

"No, why should I go to Rwanda?" said ethnic Hutu Mbarushimana when asked whether he would return to Kigali to where prosecutors want him extradited from France, where he has lived as a refugee since 2003.

"There is no justice in Rwanda. So to go to Rwanda to face justice is just like to hang himself, or to suicide himself. So that's not my case," he said in the interview recorded in Paris.

Mbarushimana—who worked for the UN from 1992 until his arrest on suspicion of genocide in 2001, seven years after the killings—has been accused of involvement in the deaths of 33 people, including former UN colleagues.

He accused eyewitnesses of making up their accounts of his role in the genocide in which 800,000 people died.

"Whatever they said is not true. I have not done anything wrong. I have never been involved in any kind of crimes in Rwanda," Mbarushimana said.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), based in Tanzania, drew up an indictment against Mbarushimana, but decided not to pursue the charges because of insufficient "special elements".

It would have been the first time a UN worker was charged with international war crimes.

Mbarushimana filed a complaint of unfair dismissal and a UN administrative panel in 2004 awarded him 12 months' back pay as the allegations against him had never been tested in court.

Former tribunal officials and investigators told SBS they believed there was enough evidence to prosecute.

As the genocide tribunal winds up, Rwandan prosecutors are taking on some of the

tribunal's cases, including that of Mbarushimana, and are calling on France to either try him or extradite him, SBS said.

French officials said almost two years ago, in June 2005, that Paris would help bring Mbarushimana to justice and send his case file to "the competent judicial authorities."

UN spokesman Farhan Haq apologised to the families of genocide victims and said the world body was disappointed the case had never been tried.

"As disappointed as we are, and believe me we are disappointed ... we have resigned ourselves to the fact that this case will not be tried. And we are sorry to the victims for that," Haq said.

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