

Rwandan colonel denies genocide

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[PHOTO]: Col Bagosora is accused of having directed the Hutu militias

The man accused of being the mastermind of Rwanda's 1994 genocide has started his defence at the UN court set up to try those responsible.

Colonel Theoneste Bagosora and three military co-defendants have already denied charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Col Bagosora's French lawyer says he will try to prove that the killings did not meet the definition of "genocide".

Some 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered in 100 days.

"The accusation that I masterminded the genocide is malicious and meant to ruin my name," said Col Bagosora, 64, reports the AP news agency.

"I want posterity to know what is the truth of the 1994 genocide."

'Unfair'

Col Bagosora was the most senior civil servant in the defence ministry when the genocide began in April 1994, after a plane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down.

The prosecution says he directed the Hutu militias who carried out the killings.

He was arrested in 1996 but his trial began only in 2002.

When his trial first started, he boycotted proceedings, saying they were unfair.

His French lawyer, Raphael Constant, denied that the killings were premeditated.