

Former Rwandan Education Minister Guilty of Genocide

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ARUSHA, Tanzania -- A U.N. tribunal sentenced a former education minister to life in prison Thursday for his role the 1994 genocide that killed more than 500,000 people.

Judge William Sekule said the tribunal found Jean de Dieu Kamuhanda, 51, guilty of genocide and extermination but acquitted him of eight other charges of crimes against humanity.

Witnesses described seeing Kamuhanda arrive at a church compound in Gikomero in his car, bringing with him armed militiamen to kill Tutsis who had taken refuge at the church. The militiamen used machetes, guns and grenades in the massacre, the judge said.

Sekule rejected Kamuhanda's alibi that he was at home in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, when the massacres took place on April 12, 1994. At the time he was the minister for culture and higher education in the extremist Hutu government that organized the 100 days of massacres which focused on the Tutsi minority and politically moderate Hutus.

"I am not happy with the sentence, and I will consider appealing after consulting my client tomorrow," defense attorney Aricha Conde said.

Kamuhanda has pleaded innocent to all charges. He was arrested in Bourges, France, in November 1999 and extradited to the U.N. Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda based in Arusha, Tanzania. The court was set up in 1994; Kamuhanda was the 17th person convicted.

In a separate case, the former U.N. peacekeeping commander during the Rwandan genocide told the court that world leaders allowed the genocide to happen by feigning ignorance of what was taking place.

Retired Canadian Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire told the court he could do little to stop the killing because he had a limited mandate and an insufficient number of troops and weapons, and that his appeals for reinforcements were rejected.

He specifically mentioned France, Belgium and the United States "as being uncooperative ... I did not get intelligence information from them." Belgium ordered the withdrawal of its peacekeepers, the backbone of the operation, shortly after Rwandan troops killed 10 Belgian soldiers.

Dallaire was being cross-examined by Raphael Constant, lead council for Col. Theoneste Bagosora, the alleged mastermind of the genocide who took control of Rwanda after the president's plane was shot down April 6, 1994. The killing began almost immediately.

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