

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



National Commission for the Fight against Genocide
Commission Nationale de Lutte contre le Génocide
Komisiyo y'Igihugu yo Kurwanya Jenoside
-CNLG-



JUNE 14, 1994: RPF INKOTANYI ARMY LIBERATED GITARAMA CITY AND THE CRIMINAL GOVERNMENT FLED TO GISENYI

Following the liberation of Kabgayi concentration camp on June 2, 1994, the RPF-INKOTANYI forces continued to exert pressure on the criminals' army in various parts of the country, including the City of Kigali and Gitarama. In Kigali City, RPF-INKOTANYI forces continued to rescue people in Nyamirambo area and elsewhere. The **June 14, 1994** was marked by a major victory for the liberation of Gitarama City after two weeks of heavy fighting.

1. GITARAMA IS THE HOME OF TUTSI PERSECUTION IN RWANDA

Gitarama Prefecture is at the forefront among the home prefectures for leaders who have been instrumental in spreading divisions and hatred among Rwandans that led to the Genocide against the Tutsi. The PARMEHUTU party which had a policy of division and discrimination was founded in Gitarama. In addition, the massacres and atrocities against Tutsi in 1959 started in Gitarama Prefecture and spread to other parts of the country.

It was in the former Gitarama Prefecture, that the massacres and acts of violence against Tutsi started on November 3, 1959 in the former Ndiza chiefdom and spread among other chiefdoms. The Hutu and Tutsi population of Rukoma and Mayaga chiefdom areas supported the Kingdom and opposed the attacks of the PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA militants, and it required Colonel Guy Logiest to use the Congolese army (known as the *Kamina*) to fight and disperse them. The massacre of Tutsi, their expulsion, and burning of their houses was more intense during the Kamarampaka elections in September 1961 and beyond.

Killing, persecuting and exterminating Tutsi was one of the hallmarks of President Kayibanda Grégoire's regime. During his ruling, Tutsi were killed at various times, in December 1963 and in February and March 1973

After Major General Habyarimana Juvénal overthrew President Kayibanda Grégoire on July 5, 1973, the Tutsi of the former Gitarama Prefecture had a temporary tranquillity period. The refugees started to return to their properties, but it did not continue because President Habyarimana also placed hindrances on Tutsi who wanted to return to their homeland.



President Habyarimana put an embargo on Tutsi who were inside the country and denied them the right to visit and be visited by their relatives who had fled abroad. He continued the discrimination and divisionism political line and Tutsi continued to be marginalized in all domains.

2. THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE WAS A PLOY TO RESUME THE PERSECUTION AND KILLING OF TUTSI FROM GITARAMA

In October 1990, when the RPF-Inkotanyi launched the liberation struggle, as elsewhere in the country, Tutsi living in Gitarama were arrested and imprisoned as accomplices of Inkotanyi, and continued to be persecuted. Subsequently, President Habyarimana's government approved the formation of a multi-party system in June 1991. Many of the people of Gitarama Prefecture joined the MDR party, as they felt that their old party had returned and that they had the opportunity to face the regime of President Habyarimana which was involved in the imprisonment and assassination of politicians from Gitarama who collaborated with President Kayibanda Grégoire.

It is in this context that the MDR supporters attacked the ruling MRND party supporters, ordering them to become members of the MDR. Local leaders of the MRND party had been forced to join the MDR party in the so-called "*Kubohoza*" literally translated as "to liberate".

After realizing that the people of Gitarama Prefecture were passionately opposed to the MRND party, President Habyarimana Juvénal used some of the most powerful leaders from Gitarama to divide the MDR party in order to weaken his opposition.

It was in this context that the MDR party was split in late October 1993, creating the so-called "MDR-PAWA" or MDR POWER. Among those whom President Habyarimana had used to divide the MDR party were: **Karamira Frodouald** who was the Vice President of the MDR, **Mpamo Esdras** who was the Bourgmestre of Masango Commune from the time of President Kayibanda's ruling until 1992, and was on the MRND Committee at the national level. Other contributors include **Callixte Nzabonimana**, the former Minister of Planning and Minister of Youth and Organizations; **Géorges Rutaganda**, son of Mpamo Esdras, the former First Vice President of the Interahamwe at the National level; **Ruhumuriza Phénias** who was on the Interahamwe committee at the national level and others.

Since the formation of the so-called "Hutu-POWER" political parties in October 1993, tensions between the MDR and MRND militants have stalled. Authorities started to convince the public that the enemy they had was a Tutsi that they must fight and kill. Meetings inciting hatred and killing of Tutsi have increased and were being held in all the communes that made up Gitarama Prefecture.



The formation of militia groups and the supply of firearms to the population had been underway since the end of 1993, although there were some residents of some communes who have been training themselves in Gako, Bugesera since 1992.

Among the well-known militia groups were the "*Bataillon Ndiza*" which was training at the top of Ndiza hill in Nyakabanda Commune, the *JEPE militia* was training in Runda at Kamana Claver's place and the **Interahamwe militia**

The Genocide against the Tutsi started to be implemented in Gitarama communes after the meeting of April 18, 1994, which brought together members of the Kambanda Government and leaders from various levels including the bourgmestres of the communes of Gitarama prefecture. The meeting was held in Murambi, Nyamabuye Commune. However, there were some communes that had started murdering Tutsi since April 9, 1994 namely Nyabikenke commune where Nzabonimana Callixte who was the Minister of Youth and Organizations is from. Elsewhere, was in Kigoma commune ruled by Bourgmestre Ugirashebuja Célestin, in Ntongwe commune ruled by Kagabo Charles, ..

Many Tutsi from the former Gitarama Prefecture had fled to Kabgayi thinking that they would find security there. It turned out that they were mistaken because members of the security committee in Gitarama Prefecture and the bourgmestres were taking the list of Tutsi to be killed, packing them on buses and taking them to Ngororero to kill them.

Starting from April 20, 1994, buses to carry Tutsi came daily and took them to *Cyome* on the borders of Nyabarongo River, in the former Kibilira and Satinskyi communes. Other Tutsi were killed in the forests near Kabgayi.

Tutsi from Ntongwe and Mugina communes were killed by Interahamwe and soldiers from Gako military base and Burundian refugees. They were killed in extreme agony as Burundian refugees took out their hearts after killing them, grilled and ate them. The cruel killing took place in various places, such as in Musambira Commune, Nyarubaka Sector where parents were requested to bury their baby boys alive, by a former Interahamwe leader Mukangango.

3. THE TUTSI OF GITARAMA HAD RESISTED THE KILLERS

In some of the locations, Tutsi were able to defend themselves against the attacks that were coming to kill them. On Mount Bibare in Kayenzi commune, Tutsi who had taken refuge at the mountain fought the attacks for two days and soldiers from Gitarama later joined forces with Kayenzi commune police and Interahamwe in a series of attacks on the Tutsi and killed them.



In Ntongwe Commune, Tutsi from Gisari Sector and Kibanda fled to the "Nyiranduga" hill to fight the deadly attacks. They fought them off for two days and retaliated them. Bourgmestre Kagabo later told the Tutsi who had been fighting that they should stop fighting and instead negotiate with them. He further told them that they should leave the mountain and join other Tutsi who had taken refuge at Ntongwe Commune to ensure their security. As soon as the Tutsi arrived at the Commune, they were attacked by Interahamwe, soldiers and communal police, who fired and threw grenades at them. The survivors were later evacuated from the Commune and killed in *Nyamukumba* Valley as they tried to flee to Ruhango sous prefecture.

In the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi, some communes in the former Gitarama Prefecture (Buringa, Nyakabanda, Nyabikenke) continued to have insecurity caused by intruders and some of the buildings of commune were set on fire like the former Buringa commune burned down by intruders in 1997.

The RPF forces that stopped the Genocide against the Tutsi, had also stopped the insecurity in those communes.

CONCLUSION

In 2019, the National Commission for the fight against Genocide released the first research book on the history of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Gitarama Prefecture and is available on its website www.cnlg.gov.rw.

It is good to read the book in order to know and preserve the history of the massacre of Tutsi in Gitarama properly. The RPF-INKOTANYI forces will always be commended for their unparalleled role in stopping the Genocide against the Tutsi and bringing Rwanda back to life.

Done at Kigali on June 14, 2020

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