



REPUBLIC OF RWANDA / REPUBULIKA Y'U RWANDA

National Commission for the Fight against Genocide

Commission Nationale de Lutte contre le Génocide

Umuryango y'Igihugu yo Kurwanya Jenoside



13/5/1994: TUTSI MASSACRE IN BISESERO

1) Bisesero was a refuge to many Tutsi who fled the massacre

The Bisesero Mountains are located in the former Kibuye Prefecture, which was shared by two communes namely Gisovu and Gishyita. These mountains were covered by large dense forests. At the bottom of the mountains, inhabited people as well as pastures reserved for cows. Bisesero borders four Sectors of Karongi District namely Mubuga, Gishyita, Rwankuba and Twumba.

Bisesero was a home to Tutsi population of about 60,000, and during the Genocide there was a history of Tutsi self-defense that reached the point where till May killers were unable to break through. Many Tutsi had also fled to Bisesero and were all killed during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Many Tutsi decided to flee to Bisesero because there were many Tutsi living there and in 1959 and beyond, they were able to resist the massacre of Tutsi. Tutsi from different parts of Kibuye and Gikongoro prefectures; Rubengera, Rutsiro, Rwamatamu, Gisovu, Gikongoro, Gishyita and Gitesi had taken refuge in Bisesero. They hoped that if they came together and join their efforts they would fight the attacks together and defeat them. This was even so because till May, killers had not been able to set fire on a single house or eat any of their cows.

On april 7, 1994, after the news broke that Habyarimana had died, in some areas of Kibuye and Gikongoro, local Tutsi started to be killed and fled to Bisesero. Soon, the Basesero also had to leave their homes and flee to Muyira and Gitwe hills. Other Tutsi who fled to Bisesero were survivors from other parts like Mubuga Church, Rwamatamu, Gitwa, Gatwaro Stadium, Kayove and elsewhere.



2) Tutsi who fled to Bisesero resisted the attacks

They spent a long time confronting killers' attacks and retaliating them and even killing some of the killers and taking away their guns even though they did not know how to use them for self-defense. Their history of self-defense lasted for long time, fighting against killers with various weapons including guns while Basesero used sticks, stones, spears and bows.

Tutsi from Gisovu and Rwankuba (the northern part of Bisesero) fought on Mount Muyira while others rallied on Mount Gitwe (southern part) and that is where they were fighting the Killers' attacks. Their tactic was to confront killers and fight them even though some would be killed but they also had to kill some of the killers and they often defeated the killers and the latter became discouraged and ran away, especially since their weapons were taken away.

The Interahamwe attacks started on April 7, 1994, and the Tutsi of Bisesero would get together to identify the source of the attacks and stop them to prevent them from entering Bisesero. In the morning, when the killers came, the Tutsi would be gathered on the top of the mountains and assault them with stones and when the stones got finished, they would all go down the hill at once and confront them to prevent killers from killing women and children as well as their cows. They would fight until killers get tired and run away. The Tutsi who were about to be overpowered by the Interahamwe, would join their comrades on other hills and join forces to ensure their victory.

The attacks came from various places: from Gisovu Commune, Rwamatamu up to Ngoma, in Mubuga Commune, and others from Gishyita Commune. Despite the attacks were from the above mentioned areas, the killers were from all communes of Kibuye prefecture and from some communes of Gikongoro. The Tutsi fighters were led by Birara Aminadabu, his son Nzigira, Segikware, Habiyaambere and Paul Bitega who were later killed. There are also some survivors including Karamaga Simeon, Aron Gakoko and Vincent Munyaneza.

As Tutsi in Bisesero had been fighting the Interahamwe for days till the end of April, officials, including former Kibuye Prefect KAYISHEMA Clement and others, wrote a letter to the former Minister of interior government called Eduard KAREMERA who was from Kibuye. They requested him for help to expel the Inkotanyi from Bisesero (at that time Tutsi were called Inkotanyi who were threatening people's security in Bisesero), he also agreed that he would seek help from the former army chief in Gisenyi and Kibuye, Colonel Anatole NSENGIYUMVA with whom they started to prepare it.



From 01/05/1994 to 12/05/1994, there were no further attacks on Bisesero, the Tutsi started to rest and thought that there would be no more attacks and some started to return to their normal activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry and others. However, the killers had gone to plan for exterminating attacks. For the 2 weeks, the killers were planning to exterminate the Tutsi who had taken refuge in Bisesero.

3) Exterminating attacks on Bisesero on 13/5/1994

Friday 13/05/1994 was the first day of the relentless attacks on Bisesero, which consisted of soldiers from Presidential Guard, other soldiers who fled the fighting, the Interahamwe from different parts and habituated killers from Bugarama in Cyangugu, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Gikongoro. The top leaders all possessed guns including Eliezer Niyitegeka, former minister, Clement Kayishema, Kibuye prefect, Alfred Musema, who ran Gisovu tea factory, Obed Ruzindana, a prominent businessman, and his brother Joseph Mpambara, Charles Sikubwabo, the Bourgmestre of Gishyita commune, Aloys Ndimbati who was the Bourgmestre of Gisovu Commune, Gerard Ntakirutimana who was in charge of Mugonero Hospital, John Yusuf Munyakazi who was the leader of Interahamwe in Bugarama, Cyangugu and others.

All of these were familiar in leading attacks on Tutsi in different parts of Kibuye and Cyangugu. The killings started on April 13, 1994, from 9 am till 4pm. The ONATRACOM buses, trucks of Tutsi who had been killed, the COLAS trucks usually used to construct the Kibuye-Gitarama road and other small vehicles full of government officials, soldiers and members of the Presidential Guards, many Interahamwe started killing Tutsi in Bisesero where they had taken refuge in the Muyira and Gitwe hills. Tutsi failed to hit them back as usual due to the fact that the attacks were so intense and they could not withstand the heavy weapons carried by killers.

The killers attacked the Tutsi while shouting "Let us destroy them". They shot on Tutsi, threw grenades at them and other killers used traditional weapons and the bodies of many children, women, and the elderly filled the place. The attack weakened the Basesero and killed many of them. More than 30,000 Tutsi reportedly were killed that day. The killings stopped at around 5:30 pm that day and afterwards killers had a meeting at a place called " Ku Cyapa" between Gishyita and Gisovu communes to plan how the killings would be carried out next morning.

At that place, Eliezer NIYITEGEKA grabbed a Tutsi girl, stripped her off her clothes and raped her in front of other killers, and immediately threw her at the Interahamwe who cut her off.



The killers returned again on May 14, 1994 and also killed Tutsi living less than 10,000 Tutsi. Survivors of the massacre started to hide in the bushes and running in the mountains, fleeing from the Interahamwe who shot at them and killed them gradually. Those who had been injured were hunted by dogs.

Most of top perpetrators of genocide in Bisesero were convicted, others are still wanted:

- KAREMERA Edouard sentenced to life imprisonment by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda;
- NIYITEGEKA Eliezer, sentenced to life imprisonment by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and died in the prison;
- NTAKIRUTIMANA Elizaphan, convicted of genocide crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to 10 years in prison;
- Col. NSENGIYUMVA Anatole, convicted of genocide crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to 15 years in prison.
- NTAKIRUTIMANA Gerard , convicted of genocide crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to 25 years in prison;
- MUHIMANA Mika, convicted of genocide crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and was sentenced to life imprisonment;
- MPAMBARA Joseph, convicted of genocide by Dutch courts and sentenced to life imprisonment;
- KAYISHEMA Clement, convicted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to life imprisonment;
- MUSEMA Alfred , convicted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, sentenced to life imprisonment;
- RUZINDANA Obedwas convicted of genocide crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to 25 years in prison;
- MUNYAKAZI John Yusuf was convicted of genocide crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to 25 years in prison;
- NDIMBATI Aloys, escaped justice and is wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda;
- SIKUBWABO Charles, escaped justice and he is wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.
- FURERE Abel (formerly the Bourgmestre of Rwamatamu Commune);
- SEGATARAMA Simon (Was the councillor of Gitabura Sector);
- SEBAHIRE John (was a Police Officer and died in Bisesero);
- RUTAGANIRA Vincent (he was a Councilor of Mubuga Sector);
- RUKAZAMYAMBI (he was a Police Officer from Rutsiro and died in Bisesero).



Many perpetrators involved in the genocide against the Tutsi in Bisesero and fled justice:

- NYAKANA HABIMANA Joseph: former councilor of the Twumba sector, he is suspected to be living in Congo;
- NZIHONGA Elysée: He was a teacher in the Gitabura sector, he lives in Congo forests;
- MUSABYIMANA Pierre: An ex FAR from Gisovu sector and he is suspected to be in the Congo forests;
- NDAMAGE: former Secretary of Gisovu Commune who fled and never returned;
- KAYIGEMA Alexis: who was the Director of IGA Gisovu and lives in France;
- KAMILI (son Mpamira) was a trader in Mubuga, fled to Uganda;
- TWAGIRAYEZU Jean Baptiste, was sentenced by Gacaca;
- NGERAGEZE Dan, former assistant mayor of the Gishyita commune;
- BUGINGO Joseph ex bourgmestre of the commune of Gisovu;
- Abbe TWAGIRAYEZU Marcel ex-parish priest of the Catholic parish of Mubuga, fled to France;
- BIZIMUNGU ex FAR;
- KARIBANA Uziah ex assistant bourgmestre of Gishyita commune, fled after the genocide;
- MUHIRWA Uzziel former advisor to the Musenyi sector and others.

Done at Kigali on May 13, 2020

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