

Forum: Crisis

Issue: Rwandan Genocide

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Introduction

In just 100 days, about 800,000 people were slaughtered. This unimaginable scale and devastating atrocity happened in the African nation of Rwanda in 1994. The sheer scale of the brutalities was unimaginable, and violence was perpetrated from all levels of society. From militia leaders to local officials, to even neighbors and family, murders committed based on ethnic superiority, namely, Hutu Power. The genocide in effect annihilated 84% of the minority Tutsi population. While the majority of victims were Tutsis, killed by Hutus, while moderate Hutus also perished for opposing the extremism.

The conflict had its roots deep in the aftermath of European Colonialism, which tended to draw arbitrary territorial borders that disregarded the relations of local groups. Furthermore, unequal treatment under the colonial regime of the ethnic groups buried seeds for later revenge and hostilities inevitable. As a result of the genocide, around 2 million refugees fled to neighboring countries, creating a refugee crisis.

While the Rwandan Genocide is mainly an intrastate conflict, western nations, neighboring nations and the UN played part in the conflict. This report will discuss the historical background, causes, process, and aftermath, analyzing key actors and international failures.

For the delegates' reference, this crisis committee will start at the night of April 6, 1994, immediately following the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana.

Key Terminology

Genocide

The intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), or the Genocide Convention, conspiracy, attempt, and incitement of genocide are all punishable as the act of genocide.

Peacekeeping vs Peace Enforcement

Peacekeeping and peacemaking are different approaches to resolving conflict. Peacekeeping typically is used to monitor the peace process, and happens after a ceasefire or peace agreement is signed, and is primarily defensive (troops will only fire if they are fired upon). Peace Enforcement on the other hand is used to enforce a ceasefire, and authorizes the use of military force to actively compel peace under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. During the genocide, the UN mission was strictly a peacekeeping force.

Hutu Power

A radical ideology promoted by extremist Hutu politicians and media that prompted the genocide. It was an ethnic supremacist ideology that asserted the superiority of the Hutu majority and portrayed the Tutsi minority as foreign invaders and enemies who needed to be completely excluded from public life or eliminated.

Hutu Ten Commandments

A crucial piece of propaganda published by an extremist magazine called Kangura in 1990, before the genocide. The "Hutu Ten Commandments" listed a set of regulations for the Hutu population to follow. The commandments were designed to shape Hutu behaviors and interactions with the Tutsi population. They pushed for Hutu unity and painted the Tutsi population as inhuman and threats to society, and effectively pitted the Hutu population against the Tutsis.

Refugee crisis

A situation where a large number of people are forcibly displaced due to persecution, war, or violence. The 1994 Rwandan genocide sparked one of the most complex and ethically fraught refugee crises in modern history, often referred to as the Great Lakes refugee crisis. Aid agencies faced an "ethical disaster," as their food and supplies were often diverted to sustain the very

individuals who were committing the genocide. Organizations like Doctors Without Borders eventually had to withdraw from some camps to avoid being complicit in militarizing terrorists.

Psychological warfare

The planned use of propaganda, threats, misinformation, and other psychological operations to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior of opposition groups. In the context of the Rwandan Genocide, psychological warfare was a deliberate, state-sponsored strategy used to mobilize the Hutu majority and paralyze the Tutsi minority. Examples include the Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL), the Hutu Ten Commandments and sexual violence as a psychological weapon.

Background

Colonial and Ethnic Tensions

The roots of the genocide extended long before independence. Before Rwanda is an independent country, it was a colony under Belgium. Rwanda, originally a kingdom dominated by the Tutsi minority (about 14% of the population) who ruled over the Hutu majority (85%) and Twa (1%), experienced heightened ethnic tensions under German (1899–1916) and Belgian (1916–1962) colonial administration. This was mainly due to Belgians favoring Tutsis for administrative roles and education, and placing Hutus in labor-intensive professions and marginalizing them using identity cards, which fueled Hutu resentment. Hutus and Tutsis are similar ethnically. Decades before the genocide, Hutus had framed the Tutsi as a “race of oppressors”, calling for “emancipation” of the Hutus in the **1957 Hutu Manifesto**.

Violent independence

Rwanda’s independence process was not peaceful. The Rwandan Genocide should also be understood as taking place within the context of a civil war. Before the genocide began in 1990, a civil war broke out between the government’s armed forces and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by Tutsi exiles in Uganda. The ongoing hostilities worsened ethnic hatred. The most notable instance was the RTL, which played continuously and nothing but anti-Tutsi propaganda and racist ideologies, including but not limited to the Hutu Ten Commandments, calling Tutsis “cockroaches”, and “cut down the tall trees” — which is a cue to kill Tutsis in the genocide. The decolonization process of Rwanda from Belgium was overseen by the UN, in which the UN decided to create a majority vote for the first administration

post-independence, which caused the sudden reversal of power to the Hutus from the Tutsis. For the Hutus, they have been oppressed under the Tutsis, and their sudden gain of power would prove catastrophic.

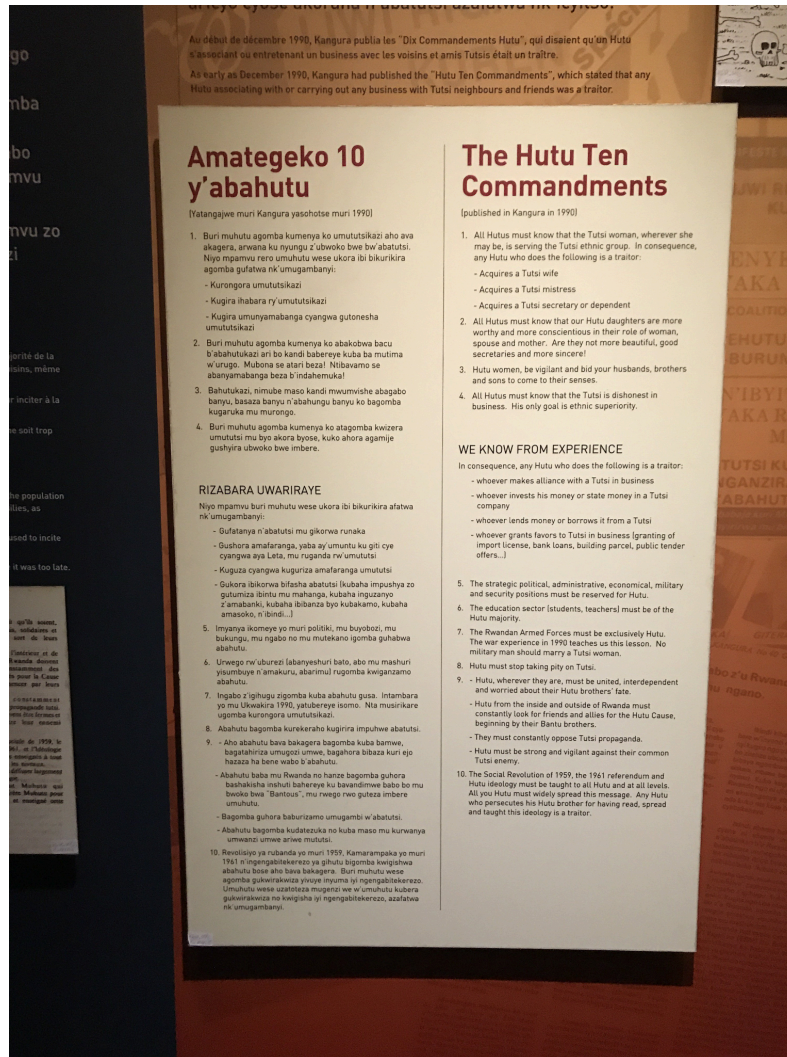


Figure 1: The Hutu Ten Commandments

Escalation of Violence

Despite long-running tensions, certain agreements were made between the Hutus and Tutsis such as the Arusha Peace Accords (1993), which were a power-sharing agreement signed between the RPF and President Habyarimana's government. It called for a broad-based transitional government and demilitarization. Hutu moderates signed it, but hardliners resented concessions made to the RPF. The turning point came on April 6th, 1994. President Habyarimana's plane was shot down. Historians today are still unsure who shot down the plane.

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Because Tutsis were seen as the perpetrators, the genocide began, in which 800,000 Tutsi and many moderate Hutus were massacred or subjected to mass violence, torture, and sexual violence. As many as 250,000-500,000 girls and women were raped in 100 days, and Hutu leaders took HIV-positive men from hospitals, jobless youth and petty criminals to form "rape squads" and infect Tutsi women. As a result, a massive HIV outbreak occurred in the country, and the healthcare system was in a state of collapse as around 80% of medical personnel fled.



Figure 2: A woman carrying a child looks at a wall in Kigali with names of the victims of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP via Getty Images.

The Role of (or lack thereof) the UN

In October 1990, the second Rwandan civil war began in which the RPF invaded Rwanda from southern Uganda. During the time of the invasion, President Juvénal Habyarimana was at the UN and flew to Europe to request military support from Belgium and France, who responded by providing six hundred soldiers.

The United Nations and the international community are strongly criticized for their failure to act despite having clear and early evidence of the planned 1994 genocide. The UN Security Council (influenced by the US) and Secretariat were accused of "willful ignorance," labeling the crisis a "civil war" or "internal conflict" to avoid the legal obligation to intervene. Following the 1993 deaths of 18 US troops in Mogadishu, Somalia, the United States led efforts to limit UN involvement in Rwanda to avoid what they believed another costly African conflict.

The UNSC voted to reduce the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) force from over 2500 to just 270 soldiers. Furthermore, UNAMIR emphasized peacekeeping, which kept them to an observer role and were unauthorized to use force to protect civilians, even as massacres occurred right outside their gates. The mission itself was also “ill-prepared”, lacking the personnel, equipment and training necessary to stop a large-scale genocide.

The international response for the Rwandan genocide was also compared to the response to the Yugoslav wars. During the Yugoslav Wars (1990-2001), NATO conducted airstrikes, and the international community deployed tens of thousands of troops to intervene with the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. Some say that the Rwandan Genocide was treated as a "humanitarian disaster" rather than a security threat (the treatment which Yugoslavia received) as Rwanda had had no oil, minerals, or strategic value to the US or UK, and there was no “national interest” to justify the risk of intervention. It’s further theorized that in the Yugoslav wars, due to constant media coverage of “concentration camps” evoked memories of the Holocaust for Europe, where leaders felt pressured to act; while in Rwanda, early reporting often mischaracterized the genocide as "ancient tribal hatreds" or a "chaotic civil war," which gave politicians an excuse to stay out, claiming it was an unfixable internal conflict.

Major Parties Involved

Hutus

Hutus are a Bantu-speaking ethnic group, primarily living in Rwanda and Burundi. They constitute approximately 85% of the population in both countries, making them the significant majority alongside the minority Tutsi and Twa groups. They were seen by the Colonial powers (first Germany, then Belgium) as inferior which fueled long-term Hutu resentment.

Tutsis

Tutsis an ethnic group that also speaks a central Bantu language that is called Kinyarwand, make up 14–15% of Rwanda and Burundi. Tutsis were favored by the Colonial powers (first Germany, then Belgium) economically and politically, thus they formed the ruling aristocratic class over the majority Hutus. Tutsis and Hutus are highly ethnically and genetically similar.

Interahamwe

Paramilitary militia groups organized by Hutu extremists (the term means “those who attack together”). Alongside another militia (Impuzamugambi), the Interahamwe carried out most of the killing during the genocide under directions from government hardliners.

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)

The violent transition to independence (1959–1962) saw roughly 20,000 Tutsis killed and over 300,000 forced into exile in neighboring countries like Uganda. These exiled Tutsis formed the RPF, which invaded Rwanda in 1990.

United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)

A peacekeeping force authorized by the Security Council in resolution 872 to monitor the Arusha Accords. It was led by Roméo Dallaire, a Canadian General. It had a Chapter VI mandate (observe and report) and was not given authority or resources to actively interfere with or stop the genocide.

France

French involvement in the Rwandan Genocide was highly controversial. Between 1990 to 1994, France supported and trained the Rwandan government forces, despite knowledge of potential future massacres. France led Operation Turquoise, a “humanitarian” military operation authorized by the UN (Res. 929) in late June 1994. It created a “safe zone” in southwestern Rwanda. Although it saved some Tutsi lives, critics argue it also allowed and helped genocidaires to flee into neighboring Zaire.

United States

Despite having intelligence regarding a “final solution” for the Tutsis in Rwanda, the Clinton administration avoided using the word “genocide” to avoid the legal obligation to intervene as outlined in the Genocide Convention. Due to the unsuccessful mission in Somalia, the Clinton administration actively avoided military involvement and used its influence at the United Nations to discourage a strong international response to the genocide happening in Rwanda, reducing UNAMIR from 2500 to 270 troops.

Belgium

Belgium has implemented policies that created ethnic divides when colonizing Rwanda that directly caused ethnic hatred and later conflicts. In 1933, they introduced mandatory ethnic identity cards that classified Rwandans as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa, and put in place rigid ethnic

socio-economic categories. During the genocide, after ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed by Hutu Soldiers, Belgium decided to withdraw all of its peacekeeping forces from the entire continent on April 7, 1994. This effectively paralyzed the UNAMIR, and caused thousands of refugees to be abandoned and executed.

Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Under President Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire was a key ally to the genocidal Rwandan regime. Zairean troops fought alongside French and Rwandan government forces against the RPF. After the RPF victory, Zaire also accepted around one million Hutu refugees, including génocidaires and Interahamwe militias, allowing them to establish bases in Eastern Zaire. Reportedly, the Zairean Government supported these groups by rearmament. This would cause the later First Congo War.

Canada

Canadian General Roméo Dallaire served as the Force Commander of UNAMIR. Despite his famous warning to the UNSC about weapons stockpiles and the plan for mass violence in January 1994, Roméo Dallaire's alerts were ignored and his requests for reinforcements denied. After the genocide, Canadian Armed Forces returned to Rwanda to assist with humanitarian relief and to help restore order between 1993 and 1996.

Uganda

Uganda's involvement was primarily linked to the RPF. The RPF itself is formed in Uganda, and Tutsi exiles had lived in Uganda since the 1959 revolution. The Ugandan government has given diplomatic and military support to the RPF throughout the civil war and the subsequent campaign to end the genocide.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description/Note
Oct 1, 1990	RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda, starting the civil war.
Aug 4, 1993	Arusha Peace Accords was signed.
October, 1993	UNSC resolution 872 establishes UNAMIR.
April 6, 1994	President Habyarimana's plane was shot down as it landed in Kigali.
April 7th, 1994	Genocide begins

Mid-May 1994	Resolution 918 increases UNAMIR strength to 5500, though arrived late and atrocities were committed.
Late June 1994	Operation Turquoise led by France.
July 18–19, 1994	RPF Victory and end of genocide.

Previous Attempts/Solutions

The Arusha Peace Accords are an example of a peace talk that was temporally successful. It was brokered by Tanzania and the Organization of the African Unity, and led to a peace agreement in August 1993 which RPF and President Habyarimana's government both signed. The agreement called for a democratically elected government and provided for the establishment of a broad-based transitional Government until the elections, and although Hutu moderates signed it, Hutu hardliners were against it and ultimately used the peace crash in 1994 as a reason to ignore it. Overall, the Arusha Peace Accords might be deemed unsuccessful as it was unable to placate Hutu hardliners and stop the momentum towards war.

Meanwhile in October 1993, the Security Council, by its resolution 872, established an international force, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). Its aim was to monitor the Arusha Accords and help support the transitional government. However its effectiveness was limited due to multiple factors, including the reduction in its size from 2500 to just 270 soldiers (decided by UNSC vote), its weak mandate to support peacekeeping but to not get involved in combat operations, and its "ill preparation", lacking personnel, equipment and training necessary. In general, the UNAMIR could be a deciding factor in the trajectory of the conflict; however, delegates will have to ensure that modifications are made to ensure that it can be effective.

The genocide itself was also not entirely unpreventable. Many parties received intelligence of the impending massacre but refused to act. Four months before the massacres, General Roméo Dallaire sent an urgent cable to UN headquarters, warning of having identified major weapons stockpiles and of an "anti-Tutsi extermination" plot. Many parties were aware and withdrew their assets and citizens, such as Belgium evacuating their own citizens in Kigali, leaving Rwandans behind. Although, on a smaller scale, certain protection efforts and responses

were made. Small contingents of Bangladeshi and Ghanaian soldiers guarded sites like King Faisal Hospital, the Amahoro Stadium, and the Hôtel des Mille Collines, protecting approximately 15,000–30,000 refugees. General Dallaire personally refused all orders to withdraw UNAMIR, and stayed with a skeleton crew to provide what little protection they could for refugees. Finally, Operation Turquoise established some safezones for Rwandans, but was in large part too late, only starting in June when the majority of the genocide had started in April..

Potential Solutions

- **Strengthen UNAMIR:** This is perhaps the most straightforward solution. As an already existing peacekeeping force, strengthening UNAMIR is a direct way to enforce peace in the region. This could be done by upgrading UNAMIR’s mandate and troops, and giving UNAMIR more power (than merely peacekeeping) under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to enforce military measures where possible.
- **Invoke the Genocide Convention:** Calling for a formal UN declaration to explicitly define the violence in Rwanda as a genocide. This would obligate member states under the 1948 Convention to “prevent and punish” genocide. While politically fraught, pushing for a genocide determination in the UNSC could have justified stronger collective action and international response.
- **Regional Intervention:** Neighboring states (Uganda, Zaire, Tanzania) could form an African force that intervenes when the UN falters. For instance, an emergency coalition of willing African states led by the Organization of African Unity could secure safe zones around Kigali.
- **Economic and Arms Sanctions:** The international community could enforce an immediate arms embargo on Rwanda and freeze the economic assets of known extremists. Cutting the weapon supply of extremists, such as potentially demanding that firms stop selling machetes, could slow down the militia. This could be done on calling out to the international community or physical border blockade.
- **Humanitarian Corridors and Safe Zones:** In Early June (or late May), the UN could have negotiated protected zones or humanitarian corridors, backed by peacekeepers or

even French troops, to evacuate civilians. Extending Operation Turquoise concepts to cover more areas (not only the southwest) could have saved more lives.

- **Targeted Military Strikes:** A controversial and unlikely option is for a coalition of international troops to destroy militia communication or heavy weapon stockpiles through air strikes. Though unlikely in 1994 context, this idea could appear in discussion as a bold crisis measure.
- **International Criminal Threats:** Announce that leaders instigating killings will be prosecuted for war crimes/genocide. Although the International Criminal Court hasn't been created yet, the delegates could create some sort of international court to prosecute those committing crimes against humanity. Delegates could reference the Nuremberg precedent or The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to create mechanisms of accountability to those committing mass atrocities. This is a measure focusing on the aftermath of this crisis, which is recommended for debate.

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