

## Rwanda Chronology

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**16th Century:** Tutsi are dominant in the area which now comprises modern Rwanda.

**1890:** Germans colonize Rwanda.

**1910:** The northern and western boundaries of Rwanda are agreed upon by colonial powers and remain essentially unchanged until the present.

**1916:** Belgian forces easily displace the German administration in Rwanda (then known as Ruanda-Urundi, an area which included Burundi).

**1923:** The League of Nations formally mandates Rwanda to Belgium (Belgian rule lasts until independence in 1962).

**1926:** Belgians decide that the population of Rwanda should be classified as either Tutsi or Hutu. Unlike in previous times, when the Hutu-Tutsi distinction was fluid (prosperous peasants could become Tutsis, while Tutsis who fell on hard economic times could suffer reduced social status and become Hutus), this Belgian administrative measure now strictly designates those who own more than ten cows as Tutsi and all others as Hutu, with no possibility of movement between the two groups.<sup>1</sup> Imposing a Belgian practice, all citizens are issued national identification cards which include an entry for tribe. Thus, the complicated hierarchy of pre-colonial times is simplified, with more power concentrated at the top, and fewer benefits and prerogatives accruing to those at the bottom. In addition, Europeans want a uniform territorial system and therefore eliminate the pockets of autonomy which had existed in pre-colonial Rwanda. Some of these autonomous regions are in fact Hutu-controlled, further reducing the status of that group and enhancing Tutsi supremacy under European tutelage.

**1946:** Ruanda-Urundi became a UN trust territory under the administration of Belgium. The Belgians begin developing institutions of self-government among the people.

**1950s:** Hutu resistance to the Tutsi monarchy increases, as does the movement for independence from Belgium among both Hutus and

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Shoumatoff, "Rwanda's Aristocratic Guerrillas," New York Times Magazine, 13 December 1992, p. 44: "In 1926, [the Belgians] classified anyone with more than 10 cows as Tutsi and made everyone carry a 'tribal' identity card." African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance (London: African-Rights, 1995), pp. 8-9: "Despite the emphasis on height and straight noses, such was the slender basis of the racial categorization that, during the 1933-4 census, the Belgians were obliged to use ownership of cows as the key criterion for determining which group an individual belonged to. Those with ten or more cows were Tutsis--along with all their descendants in the male line--and those with less were Hutu."

Tutsis.

**1959:** The Hutu-Tutsi divide widens as ethnic politics intensify. The Parmehutu (Party for the Emancipation of the Hutu People) is pitted against the monarchist and Tutsi-led UNAR (National Rwandese Union). Belgium suddenly abandons its traditional clients and dispatches paratroopers to extirpate the Tutsi power structure. Clashes between Hutus and Tutsis commence in the north and quickly spread throughout Rwanda. An estimated 10,000 Tutsis are killed, with perhaps 200,000 more fleeing the country.

**1960s:** Tutsi exiles form paramilitary units and mount incursions into Rwanda which target local Hutu officials. Tutsi exiles operate from sanctuaries in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire. The Hutu government counters Tutsi guerrillas by deploying Belgian paratroopers and by orchestrating reprisal massacres of Tutsis.

**January-October 1961:** Hutu-led political forces proclaim a Republic and abolish the Tutsi monarchy. A new constitution is drafted. The first Tutsi exile guerrilla group is formed.

**1962:** Thousands are killed in Hutu-Tutsi clashes provoked by incursions by Tutsi exile guerrillas [see entry above for "1960s"].

**July 1, 1962:** Rwanda gains independence from Belgium. On the same day Rwanda becomes a founding member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

**1963:** Tutsi exile guerrillas invade Rwandan territory in three waves on November 25, December 20, and December 27. In a pattern that is becoming typical [see entry above for "1960s"] the Hutu government permits and encourages vengeance killings against Tutsi civilians [see entry below for "1964" for numbers of Tutsis killed and exiled].

**1964:** Rampaging Hutus, in response to Tutsi rebel incursions [see entry above for "1963"], kill 5,000 to 14,000 Tutsis and drive another 200,000 (out of a total of 600,000 Tutsis in the country) into exile in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire.

**1966:** Reports of Tutsi-Hutu clashes with 200 dead.

**1972-73:** Violence breaks out in southern Burundi as local Hutus attack local Tutsis followed by widespread massacres of Hutus by Tutsi army units and supporting elements throughout the country (an estimated 80,000 Hutus are killed). Apparently in response to the unrest in Burundi, the Hutu-dominated regime in Rwanda begins a program of expelling Tutsis from positions in government.

education, and business. In addition, counter-massacres of Tutsis occur in Rwanda resulting in about 500 deaths.

**July 1973:** A bloodless military coup is led by Major General Juvenal Habyarimana (a Hutu), who proclaims himself President. Crowds of Hutus (possibly orchestrated by the military) attack Tutsis. Portions of the 1962 constitution are suspended, the legislature is dissolved, and a more centralized administration is created.

A comprehensive program of expelling Tutsis from schools, government, and business is reportedly undertaken.

**1974:** Bujumbura Conference in which Zaire, Burundi, and Rwanda agree to coordinate defense and economy.

**July 1975:** President Habyarimana's National Revolutionary (changed to Republican in April 1991) Movement for Development and Democracy (MRND) is formed and declared the only legal political party (its chief task is proclaimed to be the eradication communal conflict).

**1976:** Economic Community of the Great Lakes (CEPGL) is formed between Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi.

**1979:** The Rwandan Patriotic Front is founded by Tutsi exiles resident in Uganda, then calling themselves the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity. Harkening back to Rwanda's militia tradition, RPF fighters also refer to themselves as the "Inkotanyi," or the "the indefatigable ones." Close ties are forged between Ugandan rebel leader Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) and Uganda's Tutsi exiles. Thus when Museveni is later installed as Ugandan President, political and military debts are owed to the Tutsi exiles.

**Late 1980s and after:** Rwanda's neighbors (Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zaire) repeatedly try to negotiate a program of systematic Tutsi repatriation, but Rwanda consistently stalls claiming, with some justification, that there is no land or jobs for returnees (of course, Rwanda's neighbors face these same limitations).

**1988:** As a result of disorganized rural violence by politically and socially discontented Hutus against local Tutsi officials, notables, and civilians in the north of Burundi, the Tutsi-dominated army conducts unpremeditated massacres of Hutus. Hutu deaths are estimated to be between 5,000 and 20,000, or as high as 50,000. An estimated 50,000 Hutus also flee to Rwanda. Almost all of this wave of refugees returned home by the end of the year.

**October 1990 and after:** The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invades

Rwanda from its bases in Uganda. In response, the Rwandan security service distributes arms to local civilian officials. Eventually, the army is increased in size to as many as 50,000 effectives.

RPF forces are almost exclusively made up of Tutsi fighters with a few Hutus in showcase "political" positions. However, in a statement to the press the RPF denies that it is waging an ethnic war against the government, but instead describes their goals as merely political in nature.

Habyarimana's National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) is divided between a hardline faction which opposes accommodation with the Tutsi rebels and a smaller conciliatory faction.

There are reports that the government has arrested Tutsi businessmen, teachers, and priests as collaborators with the rebels. It is particularly significant that the government labels resident Tutsis with no connection to the RPF as rebel "accomplices." In fact, many Tutsis initially support the government against the RPF, but the regime decisively rebuffs them.

Habyarimana admits that elite Zairian troops are helping to neutralize the RPF offensive.

Habyarimana skillfully draws France directly into the conflict by staging a mock RPF "attack" on the capital, thus deceiving foreign journalists and diplomats into believing that the rebels are on the verge of overthrowing his government. France, as well as Belgium, quickly dispatches contingents to bolster the internal security of Rwanda.

Anti-Tutsi French political and military officials refer to the RPF as the "Khmers Rouges" of Africa.

Belgium cuts off military aid to Rwanda after RPF offensive, but it still furnishes the government with non-lethal aid.

**November 1990:** The RPF invasion is repulsed by government forces.

President Habyarimana announces that he will allow multi-party politics commencing in 1991. Perhaps more importantly for settling the Hutu-Tutsi issue, he also declares that the practice of specifying ethnicity on the national identification card will cease, although this measure is never implemented.

The World Bank loans Rwanda 80 million dollars to help solve chronic economic problems and calm heated political conditions brought on by the RPF invasion six weeks earlier.

**1991-1992:** The RPF conducts repeated, small-scale incursions into Rwanda.

**1991:** The US Department of State Human Rights Report for 1991 notes that up to 200 Tutsi civilians are killed in random attacks carried out by Rwandan army units and Hutu civilians. These killings are perpetrated in the northern provinces of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri, the two districts most directly threatened by RPF rebels.

**March 1991:** France gives Rwanda 13.6 million dollars worth of grant aid for the purchase of essential imports.

**June 1991:** Habyarimana signs a new Constitution which provides for multi-party politics, the creation of a prime ministership, a limited Presidential term (a candidate could seek a maximum of two terms of five years each), and separate executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government.

**July 1991 and after:** A new Political Parties Law goes into effect. It bans parties based on ethnicity or religious affiliation. Shortly thereafter, five new political parties are legally registered, and by the beginning of 1992 this figure rises to twelve.

Although large street rallies are held demanding political changes, there is no indication that the non-RPF opposition to Habyarimana is militant (for example, they do not acquire guns or train for insurgency).

**August 1991:** The Justice Minister announces that an initiative is underway to improve the human rights situation in Rwanda. The release of 5,500 people arrested following the RPF invasion of 1990 is announced.

**September 1991:** Belgium grants Rwanda 5.6 million dollars to support a structural adjustment program. Among other purposes, the funds are to be used to train Rwandan journalists in Belgium as the first step in establishing a television network based in Kigali. At this time, Belgium also announces that it will furnish Rwanda with additional food aid.

**1992:** Habyarimana makes a series of visits to Mobutu of Zaire and Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo for advice on how to maintain his power. On their advice, Habyarimana maneuvers to split two key opposition parties (one of which was composed of both Hutus and Tutsis), thus polarizing the political situation and promoting tribalism.

**January 5, 1992:** Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi agree to form a joint security commission to monitor their common frontiers.

**February 8, 1993:** Breaking a cease-fire, the RPF launches major incursions into Rwanda from Uganda (on February 14 up to 600 rebels cross the border).

**March 14, 1992:** Three of the largest opposition parties (the Rwanda Democratic Movement, Liberal Party, and Social Democratic Party) and Habyarimana's own MRND agree to form an interim coalition government.

**April 1992:** A continuing political crisis forces Habyarimana to agree to include two more opposition parties in his government.

In addition to the RPF campaign, the following developments contribute to the mounting political stress placed on Habyarimana: protest marches by four opposition parties (carried out in January in Kigali and Butare and threatened in March); a threat by Habyarimana's only coalition partner, the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), to resign from the government (February); pressure from Catholic and Protestant Church leaders to grant a share of power to opposition parties; domestic press criticism (prompting the government to arrest at least two prominent Rwandan journalists); and criticism of Habyarimana's regime in the international press (including a March 1992 charge by a scholar with France's scientific research center, CNRS, that Rwanda is practicing genocide against Tutsis).

Under the April agreement, the prime ministership goes to an opposition party, thus ending two decades of effective political monopoly by Habyarimana and his movement.

**June 1992:** Rwandan (Hutu) soldiers go on rampages in several districts as the appointed date for cease-fire talks approaches.

Habyarimana announces that he intends to restructure the armed forces following widespread looting by troops who fear that they will be demobilized if a peace agreement is reached with rebels.

In addition, the President announces that the army and gendarmerie commanders, as well as four other colonels, will be retired.

**July 1992:** In negotiations conducted under OAU auspices and attended by Western and regional diplomats, both the Rwandan government and RPF rebels agree that a neutral group of OAU military observers will monitor a cease-fire. The OAU group consists of 50 members drawn from the armed forces of Zimbabwe, Senegal, and Nigeria with logistical support provided by Belgium, France, Germany, and the United States.

Amid much wrangling by various member states on the propriety of this action, and due to the manifest lack of effectiveness of the

observer team, the OAU force is later withdrawn.

**August 1992:** The regime and RPF rebels agree on sweeping political reforms and the formation of an interim government which will include substantial RPF representation.

Rwanda and Uganda sign a security pact aimed at ending tensions over Uganda's alleged aid to Rwanda's RPF rebels. Troops from Zaire fighting in Rwanda against rebels are withdrawn.

**October 1992:** An agreement in principle is reached to transfer important powers to a new all-party interim cabinet, simultaneous with greatly reduced presidential prerogatives.

**November 1992:** Habyarimana positions his MRND in close alignment with the CDR by joining with it and three other parties in the "Alliance for Reinforcement of Democracy." Despite the democracy-friendly name of this new umbrella group, Habyarimana has now forged a united front with the most radical anti-Tutsi elements in the Hutu political spectrum.

**1993:** Habyarimana's regime begins to train militia cadres known as the "Interahamwe" (or "those who attack together"), and the "Impuzamugambi" (translated as "single minded-ones" or "those who have the same goal"). The Interahamwe, eventually the largest and most deadly militia, are Hutus recruited from the youth wing of the President's MRND. Similarly, the Impuzamugambi are drawn from the youth wing of the CDR.

The Hutu militias reportedly receive training by the army, and are furnished with grenades and AK-47 rifles, as well as machetes, knives, clubs, and bows and arrows. Other observers suggest that the French may provide direct or indirect training to the militias when they are in camps in the northeast of the country. Deployed throughout the Rwanda, the MRND and CDR militias commit massacres at the behest of both local Hutu officials and central Hutu authorities. In mid-March 1993, the militias are ordered to stand down by the government, but their network remains in place for speedy reactivation.

**January 1993:** The government signs a power-sharing agreement with the opposition, however nine Hutu MRND ministers issue a statement saying that the MRND should not accept the minority role assigned to it under the accord. In addition, in an official statement the MRND accuses Rwanda's Foreign Minister of treason for signing an agreement with the RPF. At the same time, moderate elements of the Hutu power structure lobby for a more comprehensive settlement with the rebels.

**March 24, 1993:** In response to a harsh report by a human rights panel, Habyarimana denies that any massacres have taken place

since he took office. Habyarimana blames violence on the insurgency exclusively, and denied ethnicity was a factor in Rwanda's problems. Ethnic problems will end when the war ends, the President says.

**July 1993:** The Prime Minister lashes out at President Habyarimana for failing to sign a peace treaty with the RPF.

**August 1993:** At Arusha in Tanzania, a new comprehensive accord is concluded between Habyarimana and the RPF. A coalition government is promised, featuring a Hutu Prime Minister, and a 21 member cabinet with five Tutsis. The military forces and RPF troops are to merge, creating a new Rwandan army. The reformed officer corps is to be split equally between Tutsis and Hutus, with 60 percent of the troops recruited from government forces and 40 percent from the RPF. All refugees are to be allowed to return, and multi-party elections are promised for mid-1995.

Vocal elements of Habyarimana's MRND denounce the Arusha accords, as does the Committee for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), a Hutu extremist organization closely allied with (and perhaps controlled by) the MRND.

There are reports that the government (in violation of agreements) is distributing arms to its supporters.

**November 1993:** A UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) is deployed consisting of 2,500 troops to monitor the Arusha accords reached between the RPF and Habyarimana in August. However, the ineffectiveness of this force is soon apparent. The UN force's mandate is peace-keeping, not peace-making, hence it can not actively intervene to prevent killings. In addition, it is composed of more than 20 different nationalities, each with its own language, few of whom can speak French.

**January 1994:** Another power sharing agreement is signed between the government and the RPF. Under the terms of this settlement, Habyarimana's MRND receives six of 22 government offices, including the positions of Prime Minister and Defense Minister, and the RPF is to receive five portfolios including Deputy Prime Minister and Interior. Remaining cabinet posts are to go to other parties.

The organization Human Rights Watch issues a comprehensive report entitled Arming Rwanda which documents the extent of Rwandan involvement in the international arms trade. Human Rights Watch concludes that the massive influx of foreign weapons (mostly from Egypt, South Africa, and France on the government side) greatly contributes to the number of civilian deaths in the conflict.

**February 1994:** The Minister of Public Works is assassinated in

the capital. The Minister, Felicien Gatabazi, was a Hutu but his political movement, the Social Democratic Party, is closely aligned with the Tutsi RPF insurgents. Clashes among his supporters and their hardline Hutu political rivals in the CDR ensue.

Youths associated with the CDR target government opponents, both Tutsis and Hutu moderates, for beatings and killings.

Africa Watch subsequently claims that the army also went on a selective rampage as a test to determine if the UN and world will react.

**February 21, 1994:** Elements of the Committee for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), a Hutu extremist organization opposed to accommodation with the Tutsi rebels, storm the foreign ministry building in Kigali.

**April 1994 and after:** Military clashes occur in the Rwandan capital of Kigali between RPF elements and the Rwandan military.

Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and Ntaryamira of Burundi (both Hutus) are killed when their plane is shot down by a missile over Kigali, Rwanda. The Presidential Guard in Kigali and army and militia elements in other parts of Rwanda begin attacking Tutsis and Hutus who are believed to be political opponents of the regime. The official government position is that RPF forces in the capital staged attacks on the Presidential Guard.

After the massacres begin, the government describes the violence as a spontaneous "popular uprising" against Tutsis in revenge for their support of the RPF and its assassination of Habyarimana. Government radio calls on Hutus to kill Tutsis.

With the targeting of moderate Hutus for extermination, the RPF for the first time is able to recruit appreciable numbers of Hutus into its ranks.

By mid-1994, due to civil war and genocide, Rwandan society is in a state of complete collapse: at least 500,000 people killed between April and July, approximately two million refugees abroad and one million internally displaced people, the cessation of business and agricultural activities, the death or flight of the educated and talented, and the breakdown of routine government activity including legal, educational, and health operations.

President Clinton issues an Executive Order imposing an arms embargo on Rwanda.

**May 17, 1994:** The UN accuses RPF of perpetrating massacres.

**May 26, 1994:** The Washington Post quotes the UN General Secretary on Rwanda: "It is genocide which has been committed. More than 200,000 people have been killed, and the world is still discussing what ought to be done."

**May 30, 1994:** The UN Security Council adopts a resolution condemning the violence in Rwanda, but it avoids describing the situation as genocide.

**June 1994:** Press reports appear in the American media regarding the fact that the Clinton administration is deliberately avoiding use of the word genocide. Even as late as early June, State Department officials only state that "acts of genocide" are occurring. It is not until late July, after the fall of the Hutu-dominated regime and the end of the mass murder, that Clinton's envoy to Rwanda accuses the military of committing genocide and demands that an international court prosecute the perpetrators.

**June 11, 1994:** OAU ministers call the Rwandan massacres "a crime against humanity" (they do not specify which parties are responsible for the killings, however).

**June 23, 1994:** France begins dispatching 2,500 (marine and Foreign Legion) troops to Rwanda to establish a "safety zone" where Hutus, including presumably individuals who organized the genocide, can take refuge from the RPF.

**July 1994:** The UN Security Council authorizes the establishment of a commission to investigate genocide in Rwanda.

The victorious Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) forms a government committed to the principals annunciated in the Arusha Accord signed in August 1993: societal reconciliation, national unity, and access to political power for all ethnic groups. Thus, today the Arusha agreement and the constitution form the fundamental laws of Rwanda. On a practical level, the RPF controlled government consists of 22 ministers recruited from five political parties.

Hutu radio broadcasts exhort Hutus within French safe-haven zone to flee before advancing RPF forces, causing 250,000 to go into exile in Zaire.

UNHCR estimates that between April and July 1994 200,000 to 500,000 Rwandans were killed (out of a total of 8.2 million).

UNHCR reports that since April 1994 about 2.1 million Rwandans (half Hutu and half Tutsi) have fled to other countries (estimates: 1.5 million to Zaire, 200,000 to Burundi, 460,000 to Tanzania).

**July 27, 1994:** Rwanda accepts the proposal for an international court to try suspects accused of genocide.

**July-December 1994:** The RPF government arrests 12,000 persons on suspicion of complicity in genocide. Even as late as mid-1995, it is reported that up to 1,500 Hutus per week are being detained under increasingly appalling conditions.

**November 1994:** A National Assembly is installed consisting of 64 deputies from 8 political groups. Two Hutu-controlled political parties prominent under the Habyarimana regime, the MRND and the CDR, whose complicity in genocide is beyond question, are effectively banned by the RPF government.

The UN Security Council, over the objections of Rwanda, establishes an international tribunal to try persons suspected of participating in genocide in Rwanda.

The Presidents of Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi hold a summit meeting to discuss the crisis over Rwandan and Burundian refugees. The Presidents call for "security zones" to be established by international troops as a measure to encourage refugees to return home.

**December 1994:** Rwandan Vice-President and head of the army Paul Kagame condemned the international community for its handling of Rwanda and the failure to prevent genocide.

At opening ceremonies for a new transitional parliament, Rwandan officials pledged to seek ethnic reconciliation.

**January 1995:** The UN announces it will operate a radio station in Rwanda to provide objective reporting as a means to counter propaganda spread by ethnic radicals.

**March 1995:** Rwanda's army denies that its troops were involved in a political assassination of a provincial governor.

**April 1995:** The UN charges that 8,000 internally displaced Hutus die at the hands of Rwandan troops and in stampedes caused by the shootings.

Hutus of the former Rwandan army in exile in Zaire stage cross-border raids into Rwanda.

**June 1995:** Rwanda issues new residency cards which carry no ethnic affiliation on them. Officials also pledge that new identity cards will have no such designation.

Rwandan journalists attending a seminar pledge to refrain from

inciting ethnic hatred.

**August 1995:** Zaire accuses Rwanda and Burundi of making preparations to attack refugee camps in Zaire.

Rwanda's Hutu Prime Minister submits his resignation to the country's Hutu President, citing his concern about the killing of internally displaced Hutus by the Tutsi-controlled army.

**September 1995:** Senior diplomats criticize as unrealistic a UN-brokered plan to return Rwandan refugees home from camps in Zaire.

**October 1995:** Hutu rebels, many of them members of Rwanda's former army and killer militias, increase cross-border attacks into Rwanda from Zaire. In addition, Hutu radicals circulate hate propaganda in Hutu strongholds in northern Rwanda.

**December 1995:** Rwanda arrests a prominent human rights activist after he criticized the government for human rights abuses.

Rwanda expels five Western aid agencies, raising the total number expelled to date to 43.

Rwandan officials call for the withdrawal of the UN's contingent of 1,800 troops.

The President of Burundi visits Rwanda to conduct security talks.