

## Zaire (Selective) Chronology, 1990-1997

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updated: 3/1/97

### **January 1990:**

- Approximately 10,000 Sudanese refugees fleeing fighting between government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) enter northeastern Zaire. Among those who take refuge in Zaire are about 1,000 Sudanese government troops who are flown home the next month.

### **February 1990:**

- Uganda announces that it has repulsed an incursion by 500 to 1,000 rebels operating from Zaire.

### **April 1990:**

- Army and security units deploy in Zaire's capital Kinshasa to prevent a demonstration by the opposition "Union for Democracy and Social Progress." Among the Union's demands are an end to corruption and the resignation of President Mobutu Sese Seko.

### **May 1990:**

- Angola accuses Zaire of aiding Jonas Savimbi's UNITA rebel movement.  
- Belgium suspends financial aid to Zaire after security forces shoot and kill protesting students at Lumbashi University (the government claims one student was killed, while a private inquiry determines in August 1991 that 136 students died).

### **July 1990:**

- Zaire's parliament, in which all delegates are from Mobutu's party "Popular Movement for the Revolution" (MPR), implements a limited multi-party system in which three political movements will be allowed to operate. In October, under intense pressure by opposition forces, Mobutu removes the three-legal-party limit so that other movements can lawfully participate in politics.

### **September 1990:**

- Amnesty International reports that limited political liberalization in Zaire has not led to an improvement in that country's human rights record.

### **October 1990:**

- Along with France and Belgium, Zaire dispatches troops to neighboring Rwanda following an incursion by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-dominated group operating from Uganda. Mobutu has been an advisor and supporter of Rwanda's Hutu-dominated government.  
- After heavy fighting, President Juvenal Habyarimana acknowledges that Zairian troops are operating jointly with Rwandan troops to expel the RPF. Habyarimana also flies to Zaire for consultations with Mobutu and the President of Burundi.

- Zaire announces that Western intelligence services have passed on a warning that a rebel group is planning an incursion from Angola. The rebel group is not identified, but Zaire warns of the consequences for Angola of such an eventuality.

- Nathaniel Mbumba, leader of the "Congolese National Liberation Front" (FNLC), returns from exile to participate in multi-party politics.

**April 1991:**

- Troops fire on an opposition rally in Lubumbashi, the capital of Zaire's leading mining district.

**July 1991:**

- Mobutu attempts to name Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, his leading political opponent, as Prime Minister. The offer is not accepted, however.

**September 1991:**

- The Belgian Foreign Minister states that Zaire is about to collapse under economic and political disarray.

- Zaire's "Human Rights League" claims that the country's elite "Owl Regiment" has received training from South African instructors in techniques of urban warfare and sabotage.

Further, the group claims that Zairian operatives who have received such training have carried out terroristic acts in the country's capital, Kinshasa.

- The United States announces that it is suspending aid to Zaire because of human rights violations and the failure to implement economic reforms.

- French troop strength in Zaire reaches 1,000 as France actively evacuates foreigners amid deteriorating economic, political, and security conditions.

- Following widespread looting and rioting by civilians and army troops and intensive pressure by Western governments, Mobutu agrees to share power with his opponents.

- In a sign that his control is slipping, Mobutu's elite presidential guard unit rampages through the capital of Kinshasa.

**November 1991:**

- The Organization of African Unity (OAU) urges Mobutu to peacefully end his country's crisis. African diplomats note, however, that action to form a pan-African peacekeeping force for Zaire would be taken only if that country formally requested such intervention.

- Mobutu names Karl-I-Bond as Prime Minister, provoking protests in Kinshasa by supporters of his rival Etienne Tshisekedi.

**January 1992:**

- Mobutu announces his support for free and fair democratic elections.

- The presidents of Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi meet to discuss

border protection and other security issues.

- Fighting reportedly breaks out in the Shaba province of southern Zaire between supporters of Karl-I-Bond and Etienne Tshisekedi. NOTE: this conflict is not only political, but has an ethnic component. Karl-I-Bond comes from the Shaba region while Tshisekedi hails from the Kasai province.
- The "Sacred Union" umbrella group charges the Mobutu government with circulating false information about clashes between opposition forces.
- Prime Minister Karl-I-Bond suspends the national conference convened to map Zaire's transition to multi-party democracy.

**February 1992:**

- The "Human Rights Association" (AZADHO) states that an anti-Mobutu mutiny by soldiers has been suppressed.
- France condemns Zaire for brutally suppressing a pro-democracy demonstration in Kinshasa.

**March 1992:**

- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that 12,000 refugees have fled the Kivu region of eastern Zaire into Uganda.
- The "Sacred Union" denies reports that it has a militia force responsible for provoking the flight of refugees.

**April 1992:**

- The "Human Rights Association" charges that Karl-I-Bond's faction of the UFERI party is operating a militia to kill and intimidate dissident faction leaders.

**August 1992:**

- Karl-I-Bond is replaced as Prime Minister by his rival Tshisekedi. Ominously, Karl-I-Bond declares that his home province of Shaba will not recognize Tshisekedi's government.

**September 1992:**

- Reports state that 20 people have been killed in the Shaba province in clashes between Karl-I-Bond's UFERI party supporters and rival groups from the neighboring Kasai region.
- The army chief of staff denounces leading politicians for inciting revolt, tribalism, and regionalism.

**December 1992:**

- The influential "Christian Lay Committee" calls for a revolt against President Mobutu.
- Army chief of staff Bandoma tours military bases, reportedly causing the army to divide along ethnic lines (between recruits from Bandoma's Ngbaka tribe and Mobutu's Ngabdi tribe).

**January 1993:**

- Tshisekedi's UDPS supports a call for the High Council of the

Republic (HCR), the special body overseeing the country's transition to a multi-party system, to impeach Mobutu.

- Army troops riot in the Kinshasa over poor pay and are suppressed by units of the Special Presidential Division, Civil Guard, and Military Action and Intelligence Service (SARM).
- A senior spokesman for Prime Minister Tshisekedi's UDPS party charges that troops loyal to Mobutu have systematically killed civilians in the capital.

#### **February 1993:**

- Angola charges that UNITA guerrillas are planning an incursion into their country from Zairian territory.
- Troops loyal to Mobutu surround the opposition-dominated High Council of the Republic in order to disrupt its plans for Zaire's transition to a multi-party democracy.
- 3,000 Zairians flee into Uganda in the wake of ethnic clashes between Baleega and Bahema tribes in eastern Zaire.

#### **March 1993:**

- During the month, disputes over land ownership and voting rights provoke widespread ethnic clashes in the Kivu province between Banyarwandans and indigenous tribes. Killings and pillage continue to be reported through the year and in subsequent years. In the first five months of the conflict, an estimated 3,000 people are killed.
- Mobutu dismisses his bitter rival Tshisekedi, who with the West's support refuses to relinquish power. In effect, Zaire has two competing governments, one led by Tshisekedi and one by Mobutu's candidate Faustin Birindwa.

#### **April 1993:**

- Disturbances break out in the Shaba region in southeast Zaire.
- In the northeastern region of Kivu, local militias apparently from the Nyanga and Bahunde indigenous tribes attack Zairians of Rwandan origin, known as Banyarwandans. Also participating in these attacks is the 41st Army Brigade, loyal to President Mobutu.

#### **May 1993:**

- Rebel forces, apparently operating from Uganda, mount an incursion into Eastern Zaire.

#### **June 1993:**

- Medecins Sans Frontieres reports that thousands of refugees are fleeing ethnic clashes in Zaire's Shaba province in southern Zaire.
- Meanwhile, approximately 111,000 people flee northeast Zaire (Kivu territory) in the wake of continuing clashes between Banyarwandans and indigenous ethnic groups (Nyanga and Bahunde tribes).

**July 1993:**

- The Mobutu controlled administration of Faustin Birindwa said it would not accept a UN fact mission to determine the circumstances of ethnic clashes in Shaba (south Zaire) and Kivu (north Zaire). The Mobutu government describes the Kivu clashes as a land dispute and does not furnish a casualty total.
- According to Rwandan radio and other sources, Banyarwanda-indigenous clashes have claimed 3,000 lives in the May-July period.

**August 1993:**

- Press reports place the number of dead in the Banyarwanda-indigenous ethnic dispute in Kivu province at 7,000 dead with 200,000 displaced persons.

**October 1993:**

- The governor of Shaba (Katanga) threatens to pursue secessionist measures amid continuing political and economic chaos in Zaire.
- The Mobutu administration denounces an coup attempt by military elements in Burundi that results in the death of Burundian President Melchior Ndadaye.
- Press reports and Western diplomats speak of "ethnic cleansing" in Shaba province: local politicians incite indigenous Shaba residents (also called "Katangais") to attack settlers from the Kasai region whose ancestors first moved to Shaba in the late 1800s at the direction of Belgian colonizers who were seeking laborers for the local copper mines. As many as 500,000 Kasaiens flee Shaba.
- A Katangai youth militia known as the "Juferi" distributes volatile hate-propaganda against the economically better-off Kassaiens (Shaba province is the political stronghold of Mobutu rival Tshisekedi, a Kasaien from Shaba).

**January 1994:**

- Fighting continues in the Kivu and Eastern provinces of Zaire between government and rebel forces, causing a new flood of refugees to flee to Uganda.

**March 1994:**

- 3,000 Burundians flee ethnic violence in their country and take refuge in Zaire.

**April 1994:**

- Mobutu signs a new constitution for Zaire after weeks of intense negotiation between the Mobutu government and parliament.

**July 1994:**

- A joint Angola-Zaire security commission convenes to discuss border security and allegations Zairian support for Angola's UNITA rebel movement.

- A new government is installed under Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo. The first cabinet meeting of a newly installed administration issues a sweeping decree aimed at reining in Zaire's army, police, civil guard, and intelligence services. In an additional security measure to cut down on corruption and crime, the government orders all unregistered firearms to be turned over to the ministry of defense.

**August 1994:**

- The UNHCR announces that a large-scale influx of refugees into Zaire has commenced. Presumably, these refugees are mostly Hutu Rwandans fleeing their country just as the French begin evacuating the "safe haven" they had established in the wake of RPF victory the previous month.

- A UN military spokesman announces that the former Hutu army of Rwanda has established itself in a camp in eastern Zaire and is training for an eventual counteroffensive to retake control of their country. The UN also cites evidence that Zaire is actively assisting the Hutu army to regroup. Press reports state that Hutu army units crossed into Zaire not only with small arms, but in some cases with heavy equipment such as artillery.

**September 1994:**

- Hutus residing in northeast Zaire clash with indigenous Zairians of the Hunde tribe. According to press reports, the Hutus involved in this violence are both Banyarwandans (long time Hutu residents) as well as Hutu refugees who recently fled Rwanda after the (Tutsi dominated) RPF took over their country.

**November 1994:**

- Hutus continue clashing with indigenous Zairians (see September 1994).

NOTE: A confidential report compiled by international aid donors includes allegations that Zairian security services are furnishing both sides with arms as well as participating in looting.

- Complicating matters, Banyarwandan Tutsis also clash with indigenous Zairian tribes and Hutus (Banyarwandans and recent Hutu refugees). As a result of this violence, Banyarwandan Tutsis flee into the hills for protection or cross into RPF controlled Rwanda.

- In an apparent effort to appease Western criticism, the government of Zaire orders Hutu refugees from Rwanda to cease all political and military activities. However, the continued operation of a shadow Hutu government in exile, including military training and cross-border incursions, demonstrates the insincerity or inability of the Zairian government in this matter.

**January 1995:**

- Prime Minister Kengo visits the separatist region of Bas-Zaire.

Previously, in November, radical opponents of Mobutu accused the pro-Mobutu governor of Bas-Zaïre of planning an ethnic cleansing operation in his province.

**February 1995:**

- Zaïre's "Committee for Democracy and Human Rights" accuses Mobutu of using the army to carry out approximately 20 killings per month of his political opponents. The "Committee for Democracy" has links close personal links with Mobutu opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi.

**March 1995:**

- Mostly Hutu refugees flee the Burundi capital of Bujumbura into Zaïre after Tutsi militias loot, burn, and kill.  
- The governor of secessionist-minded Shaba province is accused of acquiring armaments in preparation for a rebellion.

**April 1995:**

- Zaïrian authorities again state that they will prevent exiled Rwandan Hutus from engaging in political, military, or militia activities.  
- Despite the above announcement, Hutu fighters cross the Zaïre-Rwanda border and clash with units of the (Tutsi dominated) Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA).  
- The governor of secessionist-minded Shaba province is suspended.

**May 1995:**

- Security agents attack a meeting of the pro-secessionist UFERI party in Shaba, killing five people.

**July 1995:**

- Ethnic clashes in the East Kasai region claim 40 lives. Press reports do not indicate the motive for, or groups involved, in the disputes.  
- Militants in Shaba province declare that they will disrupt mining operations until the central government renegotiates revenue-sharing procedures.

**August 1995:**

- Zaïrian troops initiate a forcible repatriation of Rwandan refugees, causing panic in some refugee camps and an even larger flow of refugees back to Rwanda. International humanitarian aid officials, including the UN, report that the undisciplined Zaïrian troops also rape, assault, and rob the refugees.

**October 1995:**

- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announces that it will distribute aid in Zaïre's mountainous Masisi district of Kivu province for victims of Banyarwanda-indigenous clashes. ICRC estimates that as many as 150,000 people have been internally displaced by the raging, but largely ignored,

conflict.

- Zaire and Rwanda begin long-overdue negotiations on the fate of the estimated one million Rwandan (mostly Hutu) refugees in Zaire. Previously, the Zairian army had forcibly expelled Rwandans and threatened to do so again. Zaire declares that it wants all Rwandan refugees off its soil by the end of the year.

**November 1995:**

- Zaire announces that it has captured a ring of terrorists operating in the Kivu province. The suspects are identified as Rwandan Tutsis.

**December 1995:**

- Foreign diplomats confirm that Zaire has arrested eight ranking Hutus allegedly involved in the genocide of Rwandan Tutsis in 1994. These arrests follow Zairian promises to halt operations of exiled Hutu forces and cooperate with the RPF government of Rwanda in encouraging Hutu refugees to return home.

**January 1996:**

- Renewed fighting is reported in the Kivu province of Zaire between the indigenous Hunde tribe and Banyarwandans.

**February 1996:**

- Zaire announces that it will proceed with forcible repatriation of Rwandan refugees and that Zaire will not permit international aid organizations to interfere with this process.

**March 1996:**

- Augustin Bizimungu, a self-styled "General" and leader of the exiled Hutu forces in Rwanda, tells the international press that "We're free [to operate] here in Zaire." However, Bizimungu denies involvement with Hutu insurgents carrying out raids into Rwanda from sanctuaries in Zaire.

- The UN's representative in Rwanda, Haharyar Khan, states that Hutu extremists responsible for the 1994 genocide of Tutsis continue to rule by coercion in the refugee camps.

**May 1996:**

- Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) reports that 100 Banyarwandan Tutsis have been massacred in eastern Zaire and that 3,000 more are in danger of such a fate. MSF did not identify the perpetrators, but it is believed that extremist Hutu exiles have carried out such attacks recently.

- Zairian Banyarwandan Tutsis flee to Rwanda for protection from attacks by exiled Hutu extremists.

- Such Hutu extremists are also reported to be attack indigenous Zairian tribes in the Kivu province.

- International aid officials state that there is apparently a coordinated strategy by Hutu militiamen from Rwandan to drive out Banyarwandan Tutsis and native ethnic groups in order to

establish an Hutu enclave adjacent to the Rwanda border.

- Rwanda's ambassador to the UN denounces the Security Council and other UN bodies for not protecting the Banyarwandan Tutsis of Zaire from attack by extremist Hutu exiles.

#### **June 1996:**

- The "Association for the Defense of Human Rights" (AZADHO) accuses the army of massacring villagers amidst a security crackdown on so-called "Ingilima" rebels. The Ingilima is composed of recruits from the Hunde and Nande tribes. These tribes, indigenous to Zaire, have periodically been reported to clash with Banyarwandan Tutsis, Banyarwandan Hutus, and Hutu exiles from Rwanda.

#### **July 1996:**

- International aid officials warn of increasing instability in eastern Zaire as Hutu exile extremists attack Banyarwandan Tutsis and indigenous tribes. In addition, observers note that over the last two months cross-border raids by former Rwandan (Hutu) army units have increased.

#### **September 1996:**

- Zaire accuses Rwanda, Burundi (both of which have Tutsi-dominated governments), and Uganda with sponsoring raids by ethnic Tutsis into Zaire.
- Meanwhile Burundi official radio denounces the army of Zaire for persecuting Zairian Tutsis and for labelling that group as "Rwandan Tutsis."
- Amnesty International also cites Zairian officials (army and political leaders) for inciting and participating in attacks against ethnic Tutsis in eastern Zaire.
- Rwandan and Zairian troops engage in at least two clashes along their common border.

#### **October 1996:**

- Zaire announces that Tutsi rebels, with the assistance of Rwanda, have secured a region of the country in eastern Zaire. -
- The deputy governor of the Kivu province states that all Tutsi rebels as well as 300,000 (some press reports say 400,000) Banyamulenge (Tutsi) civilians have one week to evacuate the province or face destruction at the hands of the Zairian army. Press reports speak of a widespread search for, and persecution of, ethnic Tutsis in eastern Zaire (Kivu province). International aid officials report that 20,000 Burundian Hutu refugees flee their camps in eastern Zaire after an attack by Banyamulenge rebels.
- The Banyamulenge offensive succeeds in cutting a major highway in the Kivu province.
- A Banyamulenge representative in Kigali, capital of Rwanda, reports that Zairians from the Katanga and Kassai regions have joined with Zairian Tutsis to topple the Mobutu government.

Zairian Tutsis accuse their government and fellow citizens of carrying out a campaign of genocide against them.

- The "Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire" (ADFL), a broad grouping of anti-Mobutu forces, emerges.

**November 1996:**

- An estimated one million people have been displaced by conflict in Zaire.

- The UN Security Council asks the Secretary General to begin planning for a multilateral intervention force for Zaire. Canada offers to spearhead humanitarian aid efforts for Zaire.

- Tutsi rebels in Eastern Zaire announce a temporary cease fire.

- In a sign of spreading ethnic conflict, anti-Tutsi attacks occur in regions of northeast Zaire for the first time.

- Andre Kissasse Ngandu, military head of the Tutsi dominated "Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire" (ADFL), states that his group is opposed to an international peacekeeping force for Zaire.

- Anti-Mobutu Tutsi rebels capture the Goma region, displacing Zairian government troops and their Rwandan Hutu exile allies.

- In Kinshasa, a part-Tutsi prominent member of the political opposition to Mobutu is detained by security forces.

- International aid workers spot ill-disguised units of the Rwandan army operating alongside Zairian Tutsi rebels.

**December 1996:**

- Several hundred troops of the UN intervention force remain in their billets in Entebbe, Uganda, awaiting orders to enter Zaire.

- Ugandan army troops openly patrol Zairian territory just across the Uganda-Zaire border.

- Special UN envoy Raymond Chretien states that only President Mobutu can solve the crisis in Central Africa.

- Canada estimates that 700,000 Rwandan refugees have returned to their country from Zaire.

**January 1997:**

- Zairian rebel forces continue to advance, and begin threatening key mining centers in the pro-separatist Shaba province.

**February 1997:**

- Rebel leader Kabila tells Mobutu to resign or face full-scale offensive.

- Zaire strikes back at rebels with an aerial offensive.

Five African ministers meet in Kinshasa to discuss the regional crisis.

- South African President Nelson Mandela announces that he will host talks between the Zairian government and rebel envoys.