

Editorial

Way to go for France on Birara, Muhayimana

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Two separate yet connected events happened in France within a space of three days or so.

First, on Friday, November 19, the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo announced that she was dedicating a neighbourhood in the French capital to a hero of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Mayor Hidalgo, upon a vote by the Paris Councillors, dedicated the '18th Arrondissement' to Aminadab Birara, the man who has been posthumously celebrated for his role in saving at least 1,000 Tutsis in the Bisesero area in western Rwanda.

Birara has for the past 27 years been credited for being at the centre of the resistance put up by the Tutsi who had sought refuge on the Bisesero Hill in the former Kibuye Prefecture.

He mobilized men, women and children, each with dedicated roles to put up a fight against the government forces and the Interahamwe militia, who were all armed to the teeth.

The resisters used stones to repulse the attackers and accounts from the few survivors from the area indicate that the resistance put up by the indefatigable 'Abasesero' as they are popularly known, was inspired by the decades-long experience of pogroms that targeted the Tutsi from the 1950s up to 1994.

Birara was eventually killed by the militia mob who went on to kill over 50,000 in the area but a mark was left and the Abasesero are still celebrated to this day, chief of them Aminadab Birara.

The second incident in France was the commencement – finally – of the trial of Claude Muhayimana, a genocide perpetrator who also hails from the former Kibuye, the same

area as Bisesero.

The trial, which had been postponed for years finally started and one of the key reasons that Genocide survivors are optimistic about the trial is that it will shine a light on the events that took place in this area in the final weeks of the Genocide.

Not only is Kibuye the same area where Bisesero is located, it is also the main area of deployment for the so-called ‘Operation Tour-

quoise’ – a military mission by French troops which was deployed ostensibly to offer humanitarian assistance but has been accused of instead siding with the genocidal machine.

It is therefore hoped that the over 50 witnessed lined up to testify in this case will bring to light such events, especially to the French public.

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