

Rwanda: Philippe Hategekimana tried for involvement in Tutsi genocide

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The trial of former Rwandan policeman, Philippe Hategekimana, naturalised in France under the name Philippe Manier, before the Paris assize court will enter a decisive phase on Wednesday with the first questioning on the merits of the accused, who is being prosecuted for genocide and crimes against humanity.

Mr. Manier, 66, a former chief warrant officer in the Nyanza gendarmerie in the Butare prefecture in southern Rwanda, has been on trial since May 10th. He has had little opportunity to express himself and has usually chosen to remain silent when questioned.

Mr. Hategekimana/Manier is on trial for his alleged involvement in the murders of dozens of Tutsis in Butare prefecture, including the mayor of Ntyazo who resisted the implementation of the genocide in his commune. In particular, he is alleged to have ordered the erection of several "*barri-*

ers", roadblocks "*intended to control and kill Tutsi civilians*".

The prosecution also accused him of having participated, by giving orders and sometimes even by being directly involved in the field, in three massacres: that of Nyabubare hill, where some 300 people were killed on April 23rd 1994; that, four days later, of Nyamure hill, where thousands of Tutsis had taken refuge; and that of Isar Songa, Rwanda's institute of agricultural sciences, where tens of thousands of victims were recorded.

The accused contests all these accusations. In particular, he claims that he was in Kigali, in charge of the security of a colonel, at the time of the massacre on Nyabubare hill.

While in recent weeks dozens of witnesses have recounted the horror of the genocide, few have been able to formally identify the accused, known at the time of the events nearly 30 years ago as "Biguma".

"He has aged a little, but it was definitely that face", said Valens Bayingana, a survivor of the Nyamure hill massacre, as he pointed to it. But most of the other witnesses admitted that they did not know the accused, while stressing that they had *"heard"* that *"Biguma"* had organized attacks.

The court also heard testimony from former assailants, convicted of participating in the genocide, who

were questioned by videoconference from their prison in Kigali. They gave the most damning testimony against the accused, but the defense expressed doubts about the credibility of their testimony.

Questioning of the former Rwandan gendarme is scheduled to continue until Thursday. Closing arguments are expected on June 26th and the trial will end on June 28th.