

Over 800 genocide victims get decent burial in Musanze

Moïse M. Bahati

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Mourners carry remains of genocide victims to the former Ruhengeri Court of Appeal now turned into a Musanze Genocide Memorial. / Photo by Moïse M. Bahati.

Over 800 victims killed at the former Ruhengeri Court of Appeal were accorded a decent burial in Musanze District.

Due to the historical significance of the former court house, survivors had for years appealed for it to be turned into a genocide memorial.

Remains of the genocide victims were interred at the new Musanze Genocide Memorial on Friday, April 15.

Between the 12th and 14th of April 1994, hundreds of Tutsi were collected from parts of the former Ruhengeri Prefecture, which ex-

tended across today's Musanze, Burera, Gakenke districts and part of Nyabihu, before they were killed in the chamber of the Court of Appeal.

Faustin Nteziryayo, the President of the Supreme Court, said the killing of people in a courtroom shows how Rwanda's judiciary had been corrupted. Photo by Moïse Bahati

With a promise of protection by the authorities, the victims were transported from Nyarutovu, Gatonde and Ndusu communes of the former Busengo Sub-Prefecture, in today's Gakenke, to the court house, where they were teargassed, bombed and hit with traditional weapons.

Most of the victims were public workers – teachers, medical workers, bankers, drivers, agronomists – and some of them were personnel of the court of appeal.

During the burial ceremony on Friday, mourners, who included relatives of the victims, remembered the tragic events of 1994, when Tutsi were hunted down and terrorized by then government forces (FAR) and the interahamwe militia.

Due to the historical significance of the former Ruhengeri Court of Appeal, survivors de-

manded it be turned into a genocide memorial. Photo by Moise M. Bahati

Speaking at the burial ceremony, the Supreme Court President, Faustin Nteziryayo, said the killing of people at the Ruhengeri Court of Appeal shows how Rwanda's judiciary had been corrupted.

"To kill innocent people in the courtroom, a place where people should be given justice, had never happened in Rwanda and even research indicates that it never happened anywhere else in the world," Nteziryayo said.

"That alone demonstrates the excessiveness and peculiarity of the Genocide against the Tutsi. It's in that regard the authorities decided to turn this place into a memorial in order to preserve the history."

Mourners honour over 800 victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi interred at the Musanze Genocide Memorial. Photo by Moise M. Bahati

He added that Rwanda and the world should draw lessons from the effects of a culture of impunity which had taken over the country.

Jean Damascene Bizimana, the Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement, explained that in the years prior to 1994, the genocide was experimented in different parts of the Ruhengeri Prefecture, which was the birthplace of most powerful military and political leaders.

Also at the burial were the Minister of Defence Albert Murasira, members of both chambers of parliament as well as representatives of survivors' organizations Ibuka and

AVEGA-Agahozo.

Different speakers commended the former Supreme Court President Professor Sam Rugege for his personal efforts to make the former court house a genocide memorial.

The remains of more than 800 victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi were relocated from an old memorial in Muhoza Sector.

Survivors, who had for years appealed for a standard genocide memorial, said the decent burial of genocide victims was long overdue.

"We have been waiting for this memorial for many years, and we are very thankful to the leadership of the Supreme Court and other authorities that finally our loved ones will rest in a decent place," Immaculee Nzitatimfura, who lost her entire family in 1994, said.

She also praised the RPF Inkotanyi who came to the rescue of the Tutsi and liberated Rwanda.

Also buried at the district memorial are some of the Tutsi who were killed in Ruhengeri town.

Currently, over 1,500 genocide victims are buried in three memorials in Musanze District. However, it is believed many more Tutsi were killed and yet their remains have not been found and buried.

Nzitatimfura called upon people who know where the other genocide victims were dumped to disclose the information in order for them to be accorded a deserved burial.

editor@newtimesrwanda.com