

UN Rwanda genocide tribunal extends detention of suspects

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ARUSHA, Tanzania, Sept 17 (AFP) - A UN-established court said Wednesday it has extended the detention of a Belgian and five Rwandans suspected of taking part in the 1994 genocide of more than half a million people.

Jean Kambanda, prime minister of the transition government in power from April to July 1994 during the massacres, was among the six to be further detained by the international criminal tribunal, based in Arusha in northern Tanzania.

The court agreed on Tuesday to prosecution requests for the further detention of the six pending the completion of charges.

It is the third and final extension allowed before the suspects must be released, the court said in a statement. A suspect can only be detained for 90 days pending charges before the court, after which he is freed or delivered into the hands of autho-

rities in the country where he was arrested.

The tribunal was established by the United Nations in November 1994 to try those held primarily responsible for the slaughter of between half a million and 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis and moderate members of the Hutu majority. Twenty-one suspects are currently behind bars in Arusha.

The organised genocide, blamed mainly on extremist Hutu militiamen and former government troops, began after Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in an unexplained rocket attack on his plane in April 1994.

The following July, the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) seized power in the capital Kigali as more than a million Hutus fled Rwanda to neighbouring countries or further abroad, including suspected killers among the refugees.

Radio Agatashya - set up by

the non-partisan Fondation Hiron-delle (Swallow) – named the five suspects as Hassan Ngeze, a former editor of the magazine Kangura, accused of inciting ethnic hatred; General Gratién Kabiligi; Sylvain Nsabimana, an ex-district administrator in the southern Butare province; Aloys Ntabakuze, a former head of a paramilitary commando unit; and Georges Ruggiu, a Belgian of Italian origin who was a journalist on the notorious Mille Collines radio station, which broadcast Hutu propaganda during the conflict.

The Rwandans were arrested in the Kenyan capital Nairobi on July 18 and Ruggiu in Mombasa on the Kenyan coast on July 23.

The court statement also said it had extended the detention of Kambanda by 30 days, including the date of September 17.

Ngeze's detention has been prolonged by 20 days until October 6.

Kabiligi, Nsabimana and Ntabakuze have been given another 30 days, until October 16, as has Ruggiu, but his extension counts from September 22.

Chief prosecutor James Stewart

on Monday told the court that security conditions prevailing in Rwanda – to which most of the refugees have gone back since the war – and the complexity of investigating evidence was slowing down his work.

He also said that suspects could falsify evidence by suppressing proof or killing witnesses. Several UN or non-governmental agencies have reported revenge killings and the assassination of potential witnesses to genocide as refugees have returned to Rwanda.

With the exception of Kambanda who requested the extension, defence lawyers asked for their clients to be freed on bail, insisting that they would regularly report to the nearest police station.

The court has begun three substantive trials and is to resume hearings at the end of September. Thousands of detainees accused of taking part in the killings are languishing in overcrowded jails in Rwanda, where the war left the whole judicial system in ruins, with many lawyers killed or fled.

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