

Kwibuka

UK to hand over archive on Genocide to Rwanda

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Harriet Baldwin MP, Minister of State for Africa and Minister of State for International Development at Kwibuka25 Conference

The United Kingdom has said it will soon hand over to Rwanda archives they have in their possession related to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

This was announced Monday by the UK Minister for Africa, Harriet Baldwin, at a conference in London on reflection on the Genocide against the Tutsi.

The Genocide, in which over a million people were killed over a period spanning 100 days, took place amidst the indifference of the international community, notably the UN Security Council of which the UK is a permanent member.

Held at the Palace of Westminster, the commemorative event was organised by the Rwandan High Commission in London, in collaboration with a Member of UK House of Lords, Stuart Polak. It was attended by several top British politicians, among others.

Addressing participants, Baldwin confirmed that the UK government is currently in the process to avail



Mr Jeremy Lefroy MP asks a question to the speakers, as Andrew Mitchell MP, Baroness Scotland, Lord Polak and Stephen Crabb MP listen

archives of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi to the Rwandan government, in response to a request by Kigali.

“We commit ourselves once more to working towards the peaceful and prosperous shared future,” the minister said.

Once the transfer has been done, the United Kingdom will become the second country to hand over such archive to Kigali after New Zealand which handed over their own records last month.

The handover was done in Kigali between the Speaker of New Zealand Parliament, Trevor Mallard, and Rwanda’s Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Richard Sezibera.

Rwanda has recently embarked on repatriating do-



Kwibuka25 Conference UK Parliament

documents related to the Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi from different countries in an effort the Government says will help document the truth surrounding the slaughter for future generations.

‘No impunity’

Meanwhile, during the commemoration event at Westminster, Minister Baldwin said that her country takes pride in being one of the first development partners to have worked with the post-Genocide government in Kigali.

British lawmaker Andrew Mitchell stressed the importance of the Kwibuka25 event in London and the discussions held, adding that “Rwanda has a special place” in the hearts of many people in the UK.

Mitchell, who two weeks ago raised an Urgent Questions session in the UK Parliament on the issue of Genocide fugitives living freely in the UK, shared reflections and lessons from commemoration events noting that the approach of the international community “needs to be one of great humility as it failed to intervene and stood by during the period of the Genocide.”

On justice, Mitchell said that there “should be no impunity”, calling on his colleagues and all those present to ensure that proceedings relating to the Genocide suspects living in the UK “take place as soon as possible”.



The Rt Hon Lord Pickles, UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust issues, offering a contribution to the panel

Five key Genocide suspects are living free in the UK at the moment after the country’s courts rejected Rwanda and UK government’s bid to have them extradited to Kigali to stand trial.

The UK government says it has since embarked on efforts to try the fugitives in their courts, while Kigali has expressed its readiness to work with the UK investigators to ensure that the men are brought to book.

UK Parliament recently piled pressure on their government to move extradite the process.

Other speakers at Monday’s event in London included the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland who called on leaders around the world to take action and “never forget the capacity of mankind to commit evil”.

She underscored that genocide doesn’t just happen overnight, but is rather prepared and implemented over many years, through hatred and propaganda.

She cited initiatives the Commonwealth is currently implementing, following “the Rwandan example”, to tackle hate speech and extremism, and to promote unity and peace.

Scotland warned that, although genocide “may not happen again in Rwanda, it may happen again somewhere if we do not act”.

In his remarks, Lord Polak echoed Scotland’s sentiments, pointing out that “a lie that is not corrected



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Lord Polak CBE delivering his remarks



and even when he did, he received resistance from his editors.

Musabende said that the inability to understand the nature of the Genocide that was committed in Rwanda gave rise to “silent complicity” on the part of the media, adding that “we cannot afford to be neutral” in the face of undeniable evidence of injustice.

Rwanda’s High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Yamina Karitanyi, told those present that each one of them has a role to play to fight injustice, especially through openly speaking out against it whenever it manifests.

becomes truth”.

‘Silent complicity’

Meanwhile, Alice Musabende, a Genocide survivor, outlined links between international media and the Genocide against the Tutsi, emphasising that the media “got it wrong” and when it did get it, it was too late.

The media expert gave the example of a BBC reporter in Rwanda at the time Mark Doyle, who did not use the word ‘genocide’ in his reporting about what was happening in Rwanda until April 29,1994,



(From left) Dr Andrew Wallis speaking, Dr Michael Gray, Alice Musabe, Amb Yamina Karitanyi, Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP



Alice Musabende speaking on the role of the media