

GROUP FOUR: POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA



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POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA

A Scattered Population



An aid worker in Rwanda sorts through thousands of unidentified remains.

www.historywiz.com

When the genocide finally ended in summer 1994, Rwanda was in shambles. There was no government to run hospitals, schools, shelters, food programs, or factories. Public utilities such as telephones, electricity and water were also not functioning. Most of the people who had been in charge of the country had either been killed or fled to neighboring countries.

Survivors of the genocide were scattered throughout the country. Many had lost dozens of family members in the genocide. Some villages were entirely destroyed. Thousands of children were left parentless with no one to care for them. In addition to losing their families, neighbors, and friends, thousands of people had also lost their homes and land.

As survivors struggled to rebuild their lives, about three and a half million Rwandans, mostly Hutus, fled to the neighboring countries. For many years, they lived there in refugee camps. Those who supplied shelter and food for the refugees in camps couldn't tell the victims from the killers. While the international community failed to intervene to prevent the killings, international aid programs ended up giving food and shelter to many of those refugees, including thousands of people guilty of the mass killings.



Rwandan refugees trudge along a highway near Tanzania. They tried to escape the horrors of the genocide by going to Tanzania, but were turned back by at the borders by Tanzanian soldiers. Several refugees said they would walk all the way to Kenya or Malawi just so they could avoid returning to Rwanda.

In addition to dealing with the traumatic memories of the violence they had witnessed and their family members and friends who had been murdered, many survivors of the genocide had severe physical disabilities with which to cope. Many lost hands, arms or legs when they were attacked with machetes. Many women were raped and became infected with HIV/AIDS as a result. Many children were orphaned when both of their parents were murdered. Older children who survived often had to become parents for their younger brothers and sisters.

Frederick, 17, has learned to take pictures by holding the camera with his wrists. His hands were chopped off by a machete-wielding attacker during the genocide.

http://abcnews.go.com/sections/wnt/World/rwanda_children030706.html



Many orphaned Rwandan children are now parents to their younger siblings.
[www.worldharvestevangelism.org/ images/rwanda.jpg](http://www.worldharvestevangelism.org/images/rwanda.jpg)

Rebuilding the Government

In July 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the military branch that ended the genocide, established a “Government of National Unity” together with seven other political parties. In the years following the genocide, the government worked to rebuild Rwanda’s education, health, and economic systems. The Government of National Unity also created a Genocide Survivors Fund to support survivors of the genocide and a Human Rights Commission to ensure that all people in Rwanda get the basic rights they are entitled to.



President Paul Kagame
www.usip.org/events/images/003/kagame.jpg

In April 2000, Major General Paul Kagame was sworn in as the fifth President of Rwanda. On December 31, 2001, Rwanda unveiled its new flag:

Rwanda’s new flag



The Search for Justice

Now that some order was established in post-genocide Rwanda, the Government of National Unity faced several important questions:

- ❖ How could the government bring justice to the people of Rwanda?
- ❖ With most of the country's judges and lawyers dead, how could trials be held for all the killers?
- ❖ How would the government investigate and determine who the perpetrators were?
- ❖ How would the courts handle the thousands of cases that would have to be brought to court?

Thousands of people were jailed in Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide and even today, over ten years later, over 100,000 people are still awaiting trial in severely overcrowded jails. This presents its own human rights problems, such as the right to humane treatment for individuals in detention and the right to a speedy trial.

In its search for justice, the Government of National Unity worked with the United Nations to establish legal mechanisms for prosecuting and punishing those responsible for Rwanda's genocide.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was set up by the United Nations in the neighboring country of Tanzania to prosecute leaders of the genocide between April and June 1994. It is headed by judges from around the world and is responsible for trying the worst criminals – those who ordered others to kill and those who committed the worst crimes. Government officials, church leaders, journalists, and other influential figures have all been tried in this court.

As of January 2009, the trials of 28 individuals have been completed, 23 trials are in progress and 8 detainees are awaiting trial. Eight cases are currently on appeal. Five individuals have been acquitted of the crimes with which they were charged.

In addition, the national courts within Rwanda are also responsible for trying people who killed and committed other crimes during the genocide. Due to the large number of people to be tried and the weak national court system which is still being rebuilt following the killing and departure of most of its lawyers, judges and staff, the process is very slow and the system is overwhelmed.

The Rwandan government has developed a third system of justice called "Gacaca" (ga-cha-cha) to try to speed up the process, and get rid of the backlog of cases. The Gacaca process is modeled on ancient tribal customs where a criminal is confronted by the community he has harmed. Local community members serve as the lawyers and judges and trials take place where the crimes were committed. Trials are very brief and often guilty people have been given lighter sentences than they would have received otherwise. Because Gacaca does not follow recognized standards for due process and fair trials, they are controversial (especially in the international community). The Rwandan government, however, says that Gacaca is an important, legitimate mechanism which will help the country to start to heal.



*Bench of judges (left), Byumba Mutete-Kavumu. Spectators, confessed prisoners, and security (right) at the "pre-Gacaca" presentation of detainees
www.news.harvard.edu/.../13-rwanda2-450.jpg*

Lessons Learned from Rwanda

In May 1994, then-U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali admitted that the international community had failed the people of Rwanda by not stopping the genocide. In 1998, President Clinton apologized for not having responded to Rwandan cries for help and Secretary-General Kofi Annan also expressed regret for not helping to end the genocide.

In the years following the genocide, the international community realized the consequences of its failure to act. This lesson has resulted in many international calls for a system to identify potential genocides in their earliest stages and intervene so that what happened in Rwanda never happens again. There are places in the world today like Sudan, where we can see that genocide may be happening again. And yet, without awareness and action by individuals, governments and the international community, genocide will continue to occur.

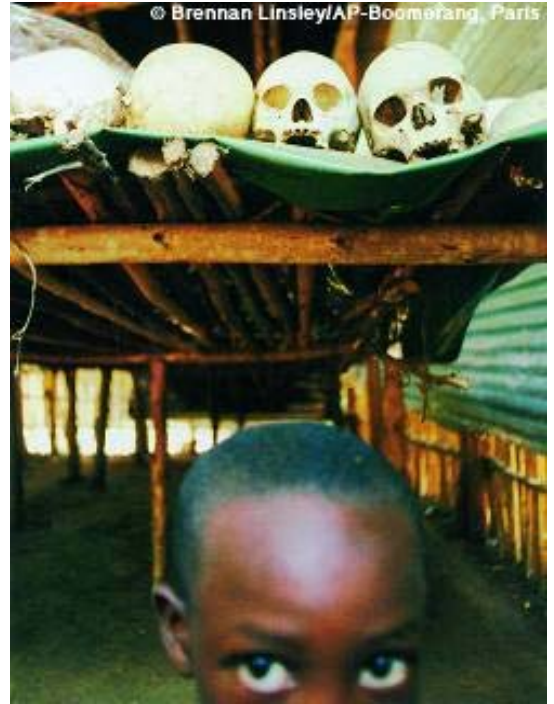


A cemetery in Rwanda.

www.donika.com/rwanda_8.jpg

A Rwandan boy in a Catholic church, which is now a memorial to the genocide. In 1994, thousands of Tutsis were massacred on the church's grounds.

www.unesco.org/courier/1999_12/photos/34.jpg



Review Questions

1. In what ways did genocide impact the development of this “developing” country?
2. Where does the rebuilding of a country shattered by genocide begin? What can the people do? What can the government do? What can the international community do?
3. How can justice be found in post-genocide Rwanda?
4. Which can bring justice to the people of Rwanda more effectively – international courts or community courts? Explain.

Talking Points

- Rwanda was a shattered country at the end of the genocide. Many leaders had been killed, the roads, buildings and services had been badly damaged and many people were traumatized by the violence.
- Many people fled the horror of the genocide and went to neighboring countries like Burundi, Congo and Tanzania to live in refugee camps. Some of the perpetrators of the genocide also lived in the refugee camps.
- Three different mechanisms have been set up to prosecute and punish the people responsible for the genocide:
- The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is run by the United Nations and has judges from all over the world. It is prosecuting key planners and leaders of the genocide, but the process is very slow and only the top people are being brought to trial.
- Over 100,000 people are in jail in Rwanda today awaiting trial by the Rwandan criminal courts. Not only are there many people to be tried, but the justice system in Rwanda still needs to be rebuilt after many of the lawyers, judges and staff were killed during the genocide.
- The Gacaca process is modeled on ancient tribal customs where a criminal is confronted by the community he has harmed. Local community members serve as the lawyers and judges and trials take place where the crimes were committed.
- In 1998 President Clinton and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan each apologized to the people of Rwanda for not having stopped the killings in 1994.
- Today the lessons of Rwanda need to be taken into account as we look at other events in the world around us – in Africa, Europe, Asia and all parts of the world.

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The Rwanda Commemoration Project: Genocide In Our Time

First They Came for the Jews

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

Pastor Martin Niemöller, 1945