

Congo agrees to extradite genocide suspect to Rwanda

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KINSHASA

Democratic Republic of Congo will extradite a suspect in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, Congo's justice minister said on Thursday, retreating from an earlier demand that Rwanda first respond to Congo's own extradition requests.

Ladislav Ntaganzwa, a former Rwandan mayor under indictment for his alleged role in the slaughter of some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus by ethnic Hutu militias, was arrested in eastern Congo in December.

He was one of nine high-profile fugitives wanted in connection with the genocide who are still at large. Rwanda has accused him of genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, extermination, murder and rape.

Justice Minister Alexis Thambwe said that he had promised a delegation from the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, a U.N. body charged with overseeing prosecutions

related to the genocide, on Feb. 19 that Ntaganzwa would be extradited within a month.

"I confirmed to them on that occasion that we agreed to extradite Ladislav," he said. "At the moment, there are just a few formalities to take care of. It could happen at any moment."

Congolese officials said after the arrest that Rwandan authorities should extradite individuals wanted in Congo first, including Laurent Nkunda, the former leader of a Rwandan-backed insurrection in eastern Congo from 2006-2009.

Nkunda is under house arrest in the Rwandan capital of Kigali, according to the United Nations.

But Thambwe said on Thursday that reciprocity did not apply in Ntaganzwa's case as he is the object of a U.N.-backed international arrest warrant.

(Reporting by Aaron Ross; Editing by Catherine Evans)