

Opinion

Genocide denialism at its peak: Lutundula and Ishimwe's song

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Some of DR Congo citizens who are Kin-yarwanda Speakers, captured here undergo a severe torture in Eastern DR Congo. Courtesy

Current international attention on the DRC has elevated a concerning trend: the rise in hate speech and violence, notably against ethnic groups such as the Tutsi, Hema, Teke, and Banyamulenge. This surge has been exacerbated by disinformation campaigns, reminiscent of the incendiary rhetoric that fueled the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, which laid bare the devas-

tating power hate propaganda can unleash.

In an upsetting speech on March 8, 2024 at the Council of Ministers of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) meeting, DRC Minister of Foreign Affairs, Christopher Lutundula, accused the government of Rwanda of cynically exploiting the tragedy of the genocide against the Tutsi as "political business capital."

While Lutundula's poignant message echoes sentiments that may resonate with some, in reality it resuscitates a discourse common amongst genocidaires and their networks, thus covering up a known support of his government for the genocidaires group Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which originates from past Rwandan genocidal regimes.

This rehashing of narratives is not only dismissive of the gravity of the genocide but also serves as a catalyst for further division and hostility and crimes in a region desperately needing peace, unity and sustainable development.

Promoting such conflict-ridden language is not just careless but dangerous. It feeds the simmering resentments that can easily erupt into violence, fueling the vicious cycle of conflict the DRC has been struggling to break free from for decades.

Disinformation and hate speech undermine the painstaking efforts towards stability and peace in the Great Lakes region and beyond. It is imperative to confront these toxic narratives head-on and dismantle them with factual counter-narratives that reaffirm our shared humanity and collective responsibility to prevent extreme forms of violence including genocidal cannibalism.

These struggles only intensify as the profile of the DRC's plight becomes clouded by the spread of fake news, racist tropes, and xenophobic conspiracy theories against Kinyarwanda speaking communities. It is crucial for the international community, media, and individuals alike to arm themselves with information that not only originates from but is extensively verified by reliable sources, to ensure that advocacy and aid efforts are informed and impactful.

Advice to readers, beware

I encourage readers not to remain passive on-lookers but to become educated, vocal activists in fighting hate speech and incitements to genocide. We should always support voices that seek to bridge gaps rather than deepen divides, and commit to an ongoing process of learning about the root causes of the conflict in the DRC and proliferation of the genocide

ideology.

In a country like Rwanda or anyplace where the scars of genocide still haunt entire nations, the insidious threat of genocide denialism rears its ugly head once more. Norman Ishimwe, a figure notorious for his affiliation with genocidal ideologies, on March 12, 2024, issued a communique under the banner of a new organization, 'All For Rwanda', praising the deployment of the SADC forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC). His words, masked in denialism take aim at the eradication of the M23 rebel group while simultaneously portraying the FDLR as innocent refugees deserving of sympathy and support. This revisionist rhetoric not only distorts historical facts but also undermines efforts to seek justice and reconciliation.

What is particularly alarming, although not surprising, is Ishimwe's attempt to white-wash the actions of the FDLR, a group implicated in genocide and several heinous crimes against humanity. By painting FDLR as mere refugees, Ishimwe seeks to elicit sympathy and support akin to that provided by certain SADC countries and Burundi. Such a narrative not only downplays the suffering inflicted upon countless Kinyarwanda-speaking civilians, especially Tutsi but also perpetuates a dangerous cycle of impunity.

In that communique, it is essential to spot Ishimwe's strategic avoidance of the term "genocide," a deliberate tactic employed to obfuscate the reality of past atrocities. His alignment with organizations like Jambo Asbl and FDU-Inkingi further underscores his commitment to spreading dangerous ide-

ologies under the guise of political activism.

Old narratives repeated

Minister Lutundula and Ishimwe's narrative is not novel; it echoes sentiments propagated by many individuals like Joseph Matata who is based in Brussels and a Canadian journalist, Judi Rever who is a genocidaires' spin doctor. There are scholars such as Prof. Filip Reyntjens. Reyntjens, a Belgian academic with ties to genocidal sympathizers, who introduced or popularized the concept of "genocide credit," accusing Rwanda of cynically exploiting historical tragedies for political gain. This narrative, rooted in denialism, seeks to delegitimize Rwanda's efforts to confront its past and build a more safe and inclusive society.

The insidious nature of genocide denialism extends beyond academic circles. In 2014, on the eve of the 20th commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi, an article published online by 'The Conversation' cast doubt on the existence of genocide ideology, relegating it to the realm of inverted commas. This blatant attempt to undermine historical truths demonstrates the enduring influence of denialist narratives.

The above mentioned examples is a stark reminder of the persistent threat posed by genocide denialism. By perpetuating dangerous narratives and whitewashing past atroc-

ities, individuals like Ishimwe hinder efforts to achieve meaningful 'Never Again'.

It's a travesty to see historical sufferings weaponized for political gains. The aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi left deep scars in Rwanda and the region. Historical wounds shouldn't be exploited for political ends. Using such painful history to garner political leverage is not just cynical; it's morally reprehensible.

Hateful rhetoric against the Congolese Tutsi is not a narrative we should tolerate. It's a stone that rolls back to the dark era of division and genocide. Our region has suffered enough. We shouldn't allow hate speech and genocide ideologies to define us.

Scapegoating Rwanda is a diversion. The real issues at hand which Minister Lutundula should be addressing is the chaos in the DRC's current polity, not historical manipulation. His government has a task of focusing on establishing order, confronting corruption, and ensuring the safety of ALL Congolese citizens.

Collaboration with groups like FDLR by any administration is an affront to justice. It must be called out and condemned unequivocally. We must stand firmly against any support for genocidal entities. This isn't about politics, it's about humanity.

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