

Kwibuka 29

Remarks by President Kagame

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First of all, it is very difficult to find what to say after the testimony we heard from Eric because what he told us says it all, following what Minister Bizimana told us in terms of the facts of history and what Eric told in his personal experiences on that, makes it hard.

But, let me say, from the facts, presented to us by Bizimana and from the personal testimony by Eric, the truth of the matter is what has always been said. You can run but can't hide. There is no hiding place for you from these very facts of our history. So even

those who have their time to say whatever they want to say, they will say it. Maybe they will do many things based on that as well. But the fact is, they cannot find a place to hide.

Also, someone said that if you ever have to choose between being kind and being right, it's better to choose to be kind because you will always be right by doing that. So, in our history, that history that Bizimana gave facts about, and from what Eric told us, kindness went completely absent. So, this is what we have to deal with on a daily basis.

Today, we gather to honour the continued sacrifice of survivors and remember all those we lost during the Genocide against the Tutsi, which really means, people are just being targeted and killed for who they were. And nobody here, or anywhere in this world, chooses what to be in that sense. Nobody chose to be what tribe, race, ethnic group. There are many things we choose to be. You can choose your religion, but you don't choose to be the person to be targeted. In fact, even those who targeted them, have not chosen to belong to that ethnic group or things like that.

So, it's very clear that the wounds are still

deep. But Rwandans, I thank all of you, for refusing to be defined by this tragic history, and people have managed to turn the page and move forward from grieving, from crying, and people have decided to live on. And even, people have been ready, have been willing, to do the most difficult thing, one or the other, they have decided to forgive, but we can't forget.

Imagine a person like Eric, with what he went through, being able to find it in himself to forgive. It's amazing. And some of those who try to distort the facts of our history, it's just because they cannot be ashamed.

But we have our lives to live, all of us, and nobody, I want to say nobody, will ever decide for us how to live our lives. We have strength, incredible strength, coming from this history that informs us, that tells us that you should never, never, allow anybody else to dictate to you how you live your life. And that is Rwanda today.

We are polite people, we are humble people, we know where we come from, we know who we are, we listen, but at the end of the day, I want to assure you, that for as long as some of us are still here, what I'm saying is just what is going to happen, that we shall have to live our lives, live the best way we can just like other people elsewhere in the world, and they have no right, and we will not even accept, that dictating to us how we live our lives can happen.

So, Rwanda has transformed itself. Unity, being together, is the foundation of everything we try to do. From the beginning, we understood the need to cultivate and preserve a spirit of "oneness" to give us hope for a bet-

ter future.

We cannot, however, ignore the fact that things like violence and hate speech persist, not so far away from here. Much as it does so, you can also see the same indifference today, as we saw in 1994.

Genocide denial is a dangerous and deliberate attempt to block the truth.

We must fight revisionist ideologies because they are easily passed on from generation to generation. We must fight denial because that is how history repeats itself.

Rwanda's youth are privileged to have a country to call home, and which embraces everyone, all of them. We need to encourage young Rwandans to learn about our past, so that they can lead with historical clarity, but also with a sense of responsibility and accountability.

That is the essence of "Kwibuka Twiyubakuka".

Rwandans will not accept any attempt to divide us. We had enough of it. More than enough. That will not succeed again, here, ever.

This underscores the need to find solutions within ourselves, no matter how unconventional that may be, and remain in charge of our destiny.

Do you remember, at the time of need, when we needed every help we could get, and everybody in the world turned their back on us. That's part of the historical facts that Bizimana told us. The world turned its back on us. So that is simple. The message is : you are on your own. So we should learn to be on our own. And I think we have learnt enough. If people help we appreciate. If they don't,

we don't have to all of us perish just because somebody didn't show up to help.

Therefore, the most important lesson our country has learnt is to transform challenges into opportunities, and also use so little to do a lot.

There is nothing Rwandans cannot overcome, through unity, hard work, and perseverance.

We will forever be very grateful to those friends and partners who stood by our side,

and some continue to do so, in the search for justice, as well as in development.

We also thank the friends who continue to accompany us on the journey to durable peace and prosperity.

Above all, and as always, I thank my fellow Rwandans for the courage they have shown in overcoming impossible odds and working together to build a new and better nation for all of us.

I thank you very much.