

Who concealed the information on Genocide victims at Kabgayi ?

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The New Times, May 11, 2021



Remains of victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi that were exhumed from a construction site at Kabgayi on May 6. Photo : Courtesy

As construction workers landscaped the field where the maternity ward at Kabgayi Hospital in Muhanga District, they discovered remains of victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

This was on May 2, and this was a surprise to many, for remains to be concealed for over 27 years since the victims were killed.

Ibuka, the umbrella body for associations of Genocide survivors is particularly riled, with officials wondering how no resident had disclosed the whereabouts of these remains after such a long time.

“Yet there are people who lived there during 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and are still here while others were convicted for genocide crimes. All these have been quiet,” wonders Naphtal Ahishakiye the Executive Secretary of Ibuka.

According to Ahishakiye, every day since May 2, they have been exhuming remains from this construction site.

“Even this Monday (May 10), over 20 remains were exhumed. The activity continues,” he told The New Times, adding that so far, remains of at least 235 Genocide victims have been discovered.

He said that during 1994 genocide, many Tutsi from different areas had fled to the area as thousands of them sought refuge in classrooms at the nearby school.

“Interahamwe-militia and military personnel killed many Tutsi in Kabgayi and they had established many roadblocks around the area from where Tutsi were intercepted and killed,” he explained.

Ahishakiye said that they have tried to map out the exact locations where the roadblocks were mounted in that vicinity.

“We have engaged investigators to probe the matter. It seems that people concealed information which they really had. We request that those who will be found culpable be punished. Investigation is underway,” he noted.

In 2009, details about the 1994 killings at the Kabgayi Catholic Diocese in Muhanga district were released in a report that was compiled by a team of 18 Gacaca judges from former Gitarama Province - who since October 2008 had been collecting various testimonies from Kabgayi survivors wherever they are across the country.

When the Genocide broke out, thousands of Tutsi fled to Kabgayi for sanctuary since it is considered the cradle of the Catholic Church in Rwanda, hence seen as sacred.

The fleeing Tutsi gathered in the church, classrooms and in structures near the hospital, but the Interahamwe militia found them and killed them.

According to the report by the judges, more than 64,000 Rwandans who had sought refuge at Kabgayi Diocese grounds were killed.

“As we mark 27th commemoration of 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, more remains of genocide victims are still being discovered simply because perpetrators hid information of their whereabouts,” Ahishakiye added.

Concealing information about genocide remains is punished according to the law n° 59/2018 of 22/8/2018 on the Crime of Genocide Ideology and Related Crimes.

Articles 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10, prohibits any actions that are aimed at denying, undermining or trivializing the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Any person who commits the said offence, upon conviction, he/she is liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than five (5) years and not more than seven (7) years, with a fine of not less than Rwf500,000 and not more than Rwf1,000,000.