

## Rwandan Civil War And Genocide

By Joel Ewert



*Rwandan Child mourns<sup>1</sup>*

We are often inclined to think in the Western World that genocides stopped after the Holocaust. Sadly, this is far from the truth, as there have been multiple genocides in the post World War 2 era. One of these Genocides is the Rwandan Genocide of 1994.

### Escalating Ethnic Strain

By the 1990's, the tiny African country of Rwanda, with a heavy agricultural economy, was densely populated. The countries population was made up of about 85% Hutu, and the rest were Tutsi or Twa.<sup>2</sup>

After World War 2, the Belgians were given the colony of Rwanda, and they favoured the minority Tutsis, putting them in power. The tension in the country created by this minority leadership led to a Hutu rebellion in 1959.<sup>3</sup> Consequently 300,000 Tutsis fled the country during the takeover, and the Hutus assumed control of the country. In 1973, militant Juvénal Habyarimana, a moderate Hutu, took control of the government in a bloodless coup.<sup>4</sup>

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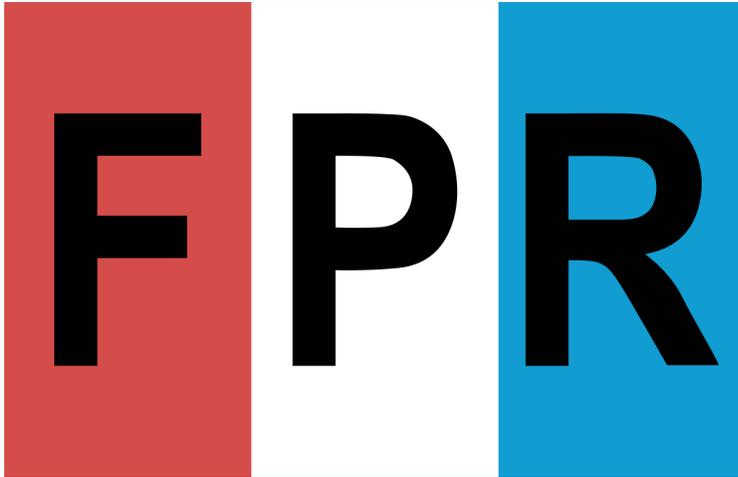
<sup>1</sup> Yapici, Cemre. "Beautiful Soul Narrative and Gendered Understanding of Armed Conflict : Case Study of the Rwandan Genocide." *Modern Diplomacy*, 10 May 2018, <http://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/05/09/beautiful-soul-narrative-and-gendered-understanding-of-armed-conflict-case-study-of-the-rwandan-genocide/>.

<sup>2</sup> History.com Staff. "Rwandan Genocide." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide).

<sup>3</sup> History.com Staff. "Rwandan Genocide." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide).

<sup>4</sup>Rosenberg, Jennifer. "A Timeline of the Genocide in Rwanda." ThoughtCo, ThoughtCo, [www.thoughtco.com/rwanda-genocide-timeline-1779930](http://www.thoughtco.com/rwanda-genocide-timeline-1779930).

## The Resistance



The Tutsi forces who were exiled by the Hutus began to create a resistance force in 1988 called the Rwandan Patriotic Front<sup>5</sup>. On October 1st, 1990, the Rwandan Civil War began when the RPF invaded Rwanda. The RPF excursion was initially successful, (despite their commander being killed the next day) but the Rwandan army, with help from Belgium, France, and Zaire were able to push the RPF back into Uganda by the end of the month.<sup>6</sup> As the fighting roared on, and Paul Kagame assumed control of the RPF.<sup>7</sup>

*The Flag of the Rwandan Patriotic Front.*<sup>8</sup>

## An Attempt At Peace

After 3 years of fighting, a peace agreement was signed in August 1993 calling for the creation of a transition government that would include the RPF.<sup>9</sup> One of the terms of this agreement was military power sharing. Unsurprisingly there were some major disagreements in that section, including how the militaries would be integrated, the size of the force and how to choose which soldiers and officers would be demobilized.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, peace seemed to be on the horizon in Rwanda. However, peace did not please everyone, specifically the Hutu extremists.<sup>11</sup>

## The Trigger

On April 4th, 1994, the situation drastically changed. After peace negotiations in Tanzania, a private jet carrying Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien

<sup>5</sup> Rosenberg, Jennifer. "A Timeline of the Genocide in Rwanda." ThoughtCo, ThoughtCo, [www.thoughtco.com/rwanda-genocide-timeline-1779930](http://www.thoughtco.com/rwanda-genocide-timeline-1779930).

<sup>6</sup> "Rwandan Civil War." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Civil_War).  
<sup>7</sup>IBID

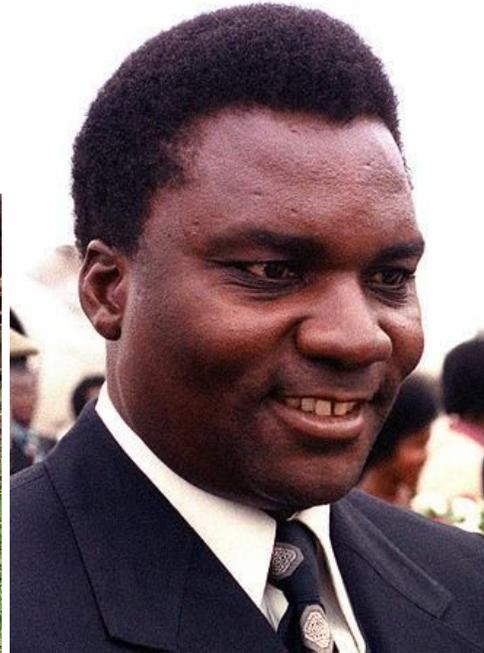
<sup>8</sup> "Rwandan Patriotic Front." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 8 June 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_Patriotic\\_Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Patriotic_Front).

<sup>9</sup> History.com Staff. "Rwandan Genocide." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwanda-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwanda-genocide).

<sup>10</sup> "Rwanda: The Failure of the Arusha Peace Accords." *The U.S. and the Genocide in Rwanda 1994: Evidence of Inaction*, <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB469/>

<sup>11</sup> History.com Staff. "Rwandan Genocide." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwanda-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwanda-genocide).

Ntaryamira along with seven other officials was shot down out of the air. There were no survivors<sup>12</sup>. Immediately the “blame game” started. Hutu extremists were quick to blame the RPF, while the RPF accused Hutu extremists as the cause of the crash saying they used it as excuse to start the genocide<sup>13</sup>. Either way, horror was poised to ensue.



*An RPF soldier visits the site of the plane crash in May 1994.<sup>14</sup> Juvenal Habyarimana in 1980<sup>15</sup>*

## Genocide Begins

Within an hour of the plane crash there was a response. The Presidential guard, Rwandan armed forces, along with the Hutu extremist militias Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi began setting up roadblocks and slaughtering Tutsis and moderate Hutus with impunity.<sup>16</sup> At the time, people had ID cards which stated their ethnic group, making it easy to pick out the Tutsis.<sup>17</sup> Among the first Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, legally the next in line to lead the country. She was being escorted by 10 Belgian guards who were part of the

<sup>12</sup>“Seized Weapon Sheds Light on Mystery of Rwandan Genocide.” The Globe and Mail, The Globe and Mail, 17 May 2018, [www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/seized-weapon-sheds-light-on-mystery-of-rwandan-genocide/article34125905/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/seized-weapon-sheds-light-on-mystery-of-rwandan-genocide/article34125905/)

<sup>13</sup>“Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter.” BBC News, BBC, 7 Apr. 2014, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506).

<sup>14</sup>“Seized Weapon Sheds Light on Mystery of Rwandan Genocide.” The Globe and Mail, The Globe and Mail, 17 May 2018, [www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/seized-weapon-sheds-light-on-mystery-of-rwandan-genocide/article34125905/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/seized-weapon-sheds-light-on-mystery-of-rwandan-genocide/article34125905/).

<sup>15</sup>“Rwandan Genocide.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_genocide#Killing\\_of\\_moderate\\_leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide#Killing_of_moderate_leaders).

<sup>16</sup> History.com Staff. “Rwandan Genocide.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide).

<sup>17</sup>“Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter.” BBC News, BBC, 7 Apr. 2014, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506).

United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda who were also captured tortured and killed.<sup>18</sup> After the soldiers deaths, Belgium and the UN pulled out most of their peacekeeping force.<sup>19</sup> Not long after, all moderate Tutsi and Hutu leaders were killed<sup>20</sup>. Soon, Hutu extremists had control of the government, and had formed an interim government which was inaugurated on April 9th, 1994.<sup>21</sup>

## Genocide Continues

As the word of the Presidents death spread throughout Rwanda so did the killing. The extremist government had prepared lists of Tutsis to be slaughtered. These lists included names, addresses, and even license plates. Radio stations encouraged people to murder their neighbors and anyone who matched the list.<sup>22</sup> Radios played a big role in the genocide, broadcasting hate propaganda and often dehumanizing the Tutsis, telling the public to “weed out the cockroaches.”<sup>23</sup> Even Hutu were also killed for reasons such as sympathy for the opposition parties, being a journalist, or just having a “Tutsi appearance.”<sup>24</sup> The Hutu extremists used rapists infected with HIV or AIDS as weapons during the Genocide, resulting in many Tutsi women being infected with the disease.<sup>25</sup>



*Rwandan boy looks on as victims of the Genocide are buried.*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> “Rwandan Genocide.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_genocide#Killing\\_of\\_moderate\\_leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide#Killing_of_moderate_leaders).

<sup>19</sup> “Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter.” BBC News, BBC, 7 Apr. 2014, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506)

<sup>20</sup> “Rwandan Genocide.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_genocide#Killing\\_of\\_moderate\\_leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide#Killing_of_moderate_leaders).

<sup>21</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Rwanda Genocide of 1994.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Aug. 2016, [www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994](http://www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994).

<sup>22</sup> “The Rwandan Genocide.” United to End Genocide, <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-rwandan-genocide/>.

<sup>23</sup> “Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter.” BBC News, BBC, 7 Apr. 2014, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506).

<sup>24</sup> “Rwandan Genocide.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_genocide#Killing\\_of\\_moderate\\_leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide#Killing_of_moderate_leaders).

<sup>25</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Rwanda Genocide of 1994.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Aug. 2016, [www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994](http://www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994).

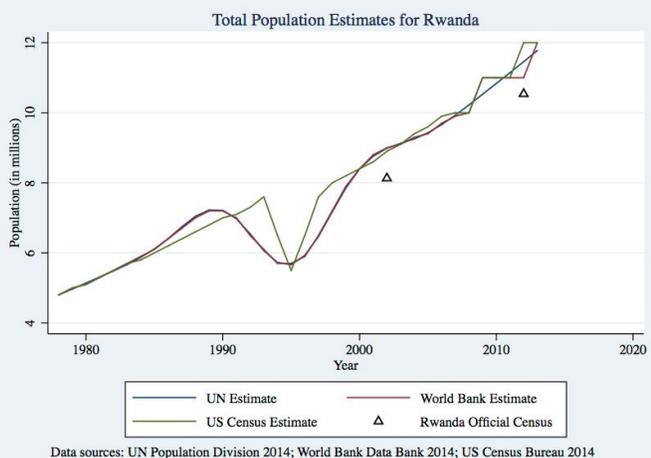
<sup>26</sup> “Rwandan Genocide - WWII Book: HUMS 8th Grade.” Google Sites, <http://sites.google.com/a/wwsu.org/wwii-book-hums-8th-grade/other-genocides/rwandan-genocide>.

## Victory and Aftermath

Through all the killings, the Rwandan Patriotic Force kept fighting to get back to Kigali. They had made major advances since April, when they resumed the civil war after the killings began.<sup>27</sup> The RPF encircled Kigali and took it back by July 4th. A transitional government was established on July 19th, bring an end to the Genocide and 100 days of slaughter.<sup>28</sup> The government was a coalition government with Pastuer Bizinzungu, a Hutu, as President and Paul Kagame, a Tutsi, and the leader of the RPF, as Vice President and defense minister.<sup>29</sup> Two million Hutus fled the country into present day Democratic Republic of Congo, then called Zaire, in fear of revenge attacks.<sup>30</sup> The final numbers are staggering, as the Rwandan government estimated that 1,070,014 people, including women and children were killed during the Genocide, 10% of which were Hutu<sup>31</sup>



A Genocide survivor shows his scars.<sup>32</sup>



Rwanda's population from 1980-2013.<sup>33</sup>

**"In their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda."<sup>34</sup> -Kofi Annan**

<sup>27</sup> "Rwandan Genocide." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_genocide#Killing\\_of\\_moderate\\_leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide#Killing_of_moderate_leaders).

<sup>28</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Rwanda Genocide of 1994." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Aug. 2016, [www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994](http://www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994).

<sup>29</sup> History.com Staff. "Rwandan Genocide." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide).

<sup>30</sup> "Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter." BBC News, BBC, 7 Apr. 2014, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506).

<sup>31</sup> "Rwandan Genocide." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_genocide#Killing\\_of\\_moderate\\_leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_genocide#Killing_of_moderate_leaders).

<sup>32</sup> "Rwanda Genocide: Lest We Forget." Words in the Bucket, 3 Apr. 2015, [www.wordsinthebucket.com/rwanda-genocide-lest-we-forget](http://www.wordsinthebucket.com/rwanda-genocide-lest-we-forget).

<sup>33</sup> "Statistics - Rwandan Genocide." Google Sites, <http://sites.google.com/site/rwandangenocide24/statistics>

<sup>34</sup> "Kofi Annan Quote." A-Z Quotes, [www.azquotes.com/quote/970810](http://www.azquotes.com/quote/970810).

## Where Was The World?

Now you may be asking “where was the help?” or “why did the world let this happen?” Sadly, there is no justifiable answer. As in the case of Yugoslavia, who’s atrocities were around the same time, outside countries remained largely unengaged.<sup>35</sup> The worst part of their ignorance, was the fact they were notified well before the genocide began. Months before the genocide started, UN General Romeo Dallaire, who was stationed in Rwanda, sent an infamous “genocide fax” warning of an “anti-Tutsi extermination plot.”<sup>36</sup>



*Political cartoon about international involvement.*<sup>37</sup>

However, the UN ignored Dallaire, and several countries pulled their forces out once the Genocide began, including Belgium, France and much of the UN force. They only evacuated their own civilians.<sup>38</sup> United States President at the time, Bill Clinton, refused to refer to the killings in Rwanda as genocide to avoid US involvement. The administration also clung to the idea that there were no U.S. interests in Rwanda, so they had no reason to get involved.<sup>39</sup> By the time the UN admitted “acts of genocide had been committed on May 17th 1994, it was much too late, as the troops didn’t arrive until June, when the Genocide had wound down.”<sup>40</sup>

## What The Genocide Taught Us

Rwanda taught us many things. One sad thing it taught us is that the world hasn’t changed. Ignorance of world powers towards major issues still exists, even after a warning and overwhelming evidence of people going through unimaginable suffering. This ignorance can cost countless lives. The world says they learned from their mistakes during the Holocaust, but it is clear this is not true. The Rwandan genocide happened just 24 years ago, and it had the same horrifying results. We must listen to the cries for help and the recommendations of our people on the ground, in the fight to ensure this monstrosity never occurs again.

<sup>35</sup> History.com Staff. “Rwandan Genocide.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide).

<sup>36</sup> “The Rwandan Genocide.” United to End Genocide, <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-rwandan-genocide/>.

<sup>37</sup> “Political Cartoon.” *Shada's Take on Leadership*, 16 July 2014, <https://shadaghnaime.wordpress.com/political-cartoon/>.

<sup>38</sup> “Role of the International Community in the Rwandan Genocide.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role\\_of\\_the\\_international\\_community\\_in\\_the\\_Rwandan\\_genocide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role_of_the_international_community_in_the_Rwandan_genocide).

<sup>39</sup> “The Rwandan Genocide.” United to End Genocide, <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-rwandan-genocide/>.

<sup>40</sup> “United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 12 June 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Assistance\\_Mission\\_for\\_Rwanda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Assistance_Mission_for_Rwanda).