

Post-Independence

From 1959 onwards, the population of Batutsi was targeted, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths, and a population of almost two million Rwandese people in the Diaspora that was to last almost four decades.

The First Republic, under President Gregoire Kayibanda, institutionalised discrimination against Batutsi and periodically used massacres against this targeted population as a means of maintaining the status quo. Some Rwandese groups in the diaspora attempted, without success to stage a comeback through armed means.

In 1965 Rwanda was declared a one-party state under MDR/PARMEHUTU, which was the architect of the racist ideology that was to be consolidated in the Second Republic under President Major General Juvenal Habyarimana.

In 1973 President Kayibanda was deposed in a coup d'etat that brought Major General Habyarimana to power. Subsequently, President Kayibanda and many prominent politicians of the First Republic were killed. More Batutsi were killed.

In 1975 President Habyarimana formed the Mouvement Revolutionnaire Natinale pour le Developpement (MRND), a single ruling party that was to promulgate in 1978 a sham constitution that repeatedly returned him to office by organising "elections" in which he was the sole candidate.

Both the First and second Republics repeatedly stated that Rwanda was a small, overpopulated country that could not accommodate Rwandese refugees if they were to return. Increasingly, the population across the ethnic lines was marginalised and impoverished while Habyarimana's regime became more violently intolerant. The divisions within the ruling Bahutu clique that culminated in the coup d'etat of 1973 became more heightened in the 1970s and 1980s when the clique talked of Bahutu of the north and Bahutu of the south. Political activities remained banned.