



Kwibuka32 | UN Rwanda commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Remarks by Minister Olivier J. P. Nduhungirehe

Kigali, 22 April 2026

Good afternoon.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere sympathies to Agnès Twagiramariya and her son Emmanuel Rwibutso, for sharing this moving story with us today. Your courage honours the memory of those we lost.

Ndagira ngo ngushimire ubutwari wagize bwo gutanga ubuhamy, ndetse n'ubutwari wagize muri iriya minsi ijana nk'ubarokotse Jenoside yakorewe Abatutsi.

Nk'uko mpora mbivuga, jenoside ntabwo ari icyaha cy'amategeko gusa, ntabwo ari ingingo zanditse mu bitaho tugomba kwemeza, kuganiraho mu Muryango w'Abibumbye, jenoside ni n'ubwo bubabare, ni n'iyi minsi mwamaze, iminsi 100. Umunsi umwe ukira undi ugakurikira, uwo munsi uzi ko ko utawurenga, ariko ukawurenga. Kandi icyo igihe nta n'ubwo wari umwe, mwari babiri. Ku buryo rero mbigushimira, kandi Igihugu cyose kigomba kugushimira ubwo butwari wagize.

I also extend my deepest sympathies to the families of the UN foreign staff who were murdered during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Today, we remember those sixty-four UN personnel that are honoured on the commemorative stone erected on these grounds. They served the noble mission and values of the United Nations.



We also gather to remember family members, colleagues, friends, neighbours, just human beings, whose lives were shattered during the Genocide against the Tutsi.

Because we do not commemorate the Genocide, we do not commemorate a crime, because no one wants to commemorate a crime, we commemorate the victims of that crime, those who were killed for who they were.

In 1994, children became orphans, wives became widows, mothers saw their children die in their arms, patients were killed by doctors, and students were killed by teachers. This rainy season of April 1994 had transformed our country in a torrent of blood.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to pay tribute also to the brave UN peacekeepers who lost their lives during the Genocide, and all those who fell in the line of duty. Today, we honour the ten Belgian paratroopers, who left their families for a noble mission for the community of nations.

They were killed on the very first day of the Genocide, while protecting the then Prime Minister of Rwanda, late Agatha Uwilingimana, who is honored in Rwanda as a hero.

Ladies and gentlemen, the colleagues we remember today worked for the development of this country, for the common good, and for the principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

The preamble of that Charter remains as powerful today as it was first written: *“We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war [...] reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person”*.

It is on days like this that we feel the full weight of those words; for genocide is the gravest crime known to humanity.



It was to prevent such horrors that the world pledged “*Never Again*” in 1945 after the Holocaust. It was upon that pledge that the United Nations was founded: as a community of nations committed to peace, human dignity and human progress.

Yet in 1994, that promise was broken. While debates were ongoing in New York over terminology and whether or not to intervene, thousands of Tutsis were being massacred each day in Rwanda.

Here in Kigali, while the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, UNAMIR, was stripped of the means to protect civilians, Tutsis were hunted across the country, including members of the mission’s own local staff.

Retired Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire later described as Fatmata said, described the Genocide as a “failure of humanity” — the very humanity the UN Charter was created to defend.

And yet, even in that darkest hour, there were individuals who chose courage over indifference, and humanity over fear. I would like to particularly honour Captain Mbaye Diagne of Senegal, who alone saved up to a thousand Tutsi during the Genocide, defying orders from New York, before paying as a dignified human being the ultimate sacrifice.

He was posthumously decorated by Rwanda in July 2010, and in May 2014, the UN Security Council established the Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage. A medal that is given to those who demonstrate exceptional courage in the face of extreme danger.

Within UNAMIR itself, some also distinguished themselves through extraordinary bravery, saving hundreds of lives.



In this respect, I wish to pay tribute to the Ghanaian contingent for their bravery. I particularly thank Major General Henry Kwami Anyidoho and Major General Joseph Narh Adinkra of Ghana, who were honoured in 2022 for their courage with the *National Order of Bravery Medal*.

On the 11th of April this year, a memorial was even erected by the Ashesi University in Ghana to honor the victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi and to pay tribute to Ghanaian contingent in Rwanda.

At the Security Council in New York, there were also diplomats who spoke with moral clarity when many others, including the powerful members of the Council, did not; namely, Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand, Ambassador Karel Kovanda, of the Czech Republic, Professor Ibrahim Gambari of Nigeria. These Ambassadors were all later awarded the “*Umurinzi*” Campaign Against Genocide Medal in 2010 by His Excellency the President of the Republic.

Ladies and gentlemen, Rwanda appreciates the positive role of the United Nations in the unity and socio-economic transformation of Rwanda over the last thirty-two years.

Rwanda also appreciates the efforts of the United Nations in learning from mistakes of the past. In 2005, during the World Summit marking the 60th anniversary of the Organisation, the Principle of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) was established.

As a matter of fact, Rwanda served for more than a decade as the co-chair of the Group of Friends of the R2P in New-York, first with Norway and later with the Netherlands.

Similarly, Rwanda commends the United Nations for creating the Office of the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect and that of the Special



Adviser on Prevention of Genocide within the Office of the UN Secretary General.

However, as the United Nations marked its 80th anniversary last year, that milestone remains both a celebration of achievement and a reminder of unfinished responsibility.

Indeed, although the Genocide against the Tutsi occurred thirty-two years ago, attempts to minimize it, to distort it, or deny it altogether still persist.

Yet, in September 1998, the *International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda* (ICTR), in its first landmark *Akayesu* judgment, clearly established that a crime of genocide was perpetrated in Rwanda against the Tutsi ethnic group.

This was confirmed by the ICTR judicial notice of June 2006, which recognized the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi as a fact of common knowledge, ending any legal debate on the terminology.

Later on, in April 2020, the UN General Assembly re-designated April 7th as the International Day of Reflection of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. In the same resolution, the General Assembly further condemned, without reservation, any denial of the Genocide.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the Genocide against the Tutsi is a crime established by a UN tribunal and recognized by the UN General Assembly, we regret that it is still denied to this day.

We particularly regret that even some UN Member States resisted the adoption of the correct terminology, thereby fuelling Genocide denial in academic, Government and political circles.



In 1994, Rwanda chose the path of unity, reconciliation and progress. However, on the other side of our Western border, the army and militias that committed Genocide were never disarmed.

Worse still, they were allowed to operate freely and regularly attacked our country, committing ethnic-based massacres, like that of Nyange in 1997.

Over the last three decades, genocidal militias like the FDLR have found fertile ground in DRC for their genocide ideology. They have been supported, armed and embedded by the DRC Government and security apparatus.

In this regard, one should ask a simple question. How is it possible that a UN sanctioned group, responsible for a Genocide, established by a UN tribunal and recognized by the UN General Assembly is allowed to operate across Rwanda's border, for more than three decades, in full view of the very international community that pledge "Never Again" and in the presence of a UN force that is deployed on the ground for more than a quarter century.

As a result of the presence of these armed groups, ethnic violence has continued to soar in Eastern DRC. State-sponsored hate speech against the Congolese Tutsi, including the Banyamulenge, has been voiced by senior government officials on official platforms, using language, the same words, the same quotes as those of the period preceding the genocide in 1994.

Rwanda therefore calls on the United Nations not to fail this region once again, but to stand firmly against hatred, injustice and the seeds of genocide.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to conclude by reaffirming the importance of remembrance. A few years ago, His Excellency the President reminded us that we should remember the past but also remember the future we had committed to. A future of unity and renewal.



As we remember to keep alive the flame of hope, we should also speak up against hate, against racism, against antisemitism, against discrimination, against persecution, and most importantly we should speak up against indifference of those who are in the capacity to act.

Let me thank, once again, the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Rwanda leadership for organizing this important commemoration.

As we continue to honour our loved ones in these 100 days of *Kwibuka*, let us continue to remember, unite and renew.

I thank you.