

# Financier of 1994 Rwandan genocide Félicien Kabuga arrested in Paris

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Félicien Kabuga, aged 84, accused of being one of the main financiers of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, was arrested last month in Asnières-sur-Seine in the Paris suburbs. One of Rwanda's wealthiest businessmen at the time of the genocide of the Tutsis, he was often called the "genocide financier" for having financed and equipped the Interahamwe militias that carried out most of the massacres during the genocide. He also created *Radio Mille Collines* (Thousand Hills Radio), which broadcast Hutu-extremist ideology, including calls for murder during the genocide.

Victims' associations have provided information to French courts on around 30 individuals accused of complicity in genocide but have been stonewalled by the authorities. And so it is not surprising that Kabuga, though supposedly wanted since 1997, was able to peacefully live for decades in France.

He received assistance from his children, whom police monitored in order to find him. He was hiding under an assumed identity with a "passport from an African country" that investigators refused to identify. They did not say either since when Kabuga had lived in France.

The last time Kabuga had been found with certainty, though he escaped police, was in 2007 in Frankfurt, where he was traveling on a Tanzanian passport. He was with Augustin Ndirakobuca, the Rwandan minister of economic planning during the genocide, who is also wanted by the International Criminal Court for Rwanda, and who was arrested by German police. According to French investigators, Kabuga used 28 false identities while in hiding. This gives some idea of the networks of assistance that organizers of the Rwandan genocide have across Africa and Europe.

Kabuga will be extradited to be judged by the Mechanism for International Criminal Courts whose

prosecutor coordinated the arrest, and who took over pending Rwandan cases previously assigned to the International Criminal Court. Kabuga is to be judged at Arusha, in Tanzania.

It remains to be seen why France suddenly cooperated with the campaign to arrest Kabuga. Its relations with Rwanda have been strained especially since the breaking of diplomatic relations from 2006 to 2009. Since Michel Flesch left the post in 2015, France has had no ambassador to Rwanda, and the embassy in Kigali is led by a lower-ranking *chargé d'affaires*, as Rwanda has refused to recognize ambassadors proposed by France. Rwanda for its part sent an experienced ambassador to Paris, François-Xavier Ndirakobuca.

The stakes for French imperialism, which is seeking to consolidate its positions in the region, are vast. Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda regularly wage proxy warfare though militias that are still active in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). France and other imperialist powers are concerned by China's rising commercial influence in Africa, which has upset French and NATO transnational corporations in what they consider to be their "backyard." They use all diplomatic and military means to counter this influence.

A quarter century since this genocide, the French regime is still trying to hide French imperialism's responsibility and the support it granted to the ethnic-Hutu Rwandan regime between April and July 1994 as it carried out the murder of 800,000 members of the Tutsi minority and Hutus favorable to political accords with the Tutsis. France allowed the genocidal forces to flee towards the Congo in Operation Turquoise, as the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) of future President Paul Kagame took control of the country with tacit US backing.

Besides its responsibility for the genocide, France, by permitting Hutu extremists to leave Rwanda and take control of camps with Hutu refugees who fled Rwanda and Burundi towards the Congo, bears devastating responsibility for the 1996–1997 and 1998–2003 Congo wars, which claimed millions of lives. It has justifiably been referred to as an “African world war.” It involved nine African countries and around 30 armed groups, making it the largest inter-state conflict in Africa’s contemporary history.

After the Stalinist regime dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, French, British and US imperialism waged brutal struggles for influence in Africa that led to bloody wars and genocide. The social and democratic aspirations of the African population found no progressive representative under conditions where no political parties there defended an internationalist socialist perspective in the working class.

The last stages of events before the Rwandan genocide took place under the presidency of the Socialist Party’s (PS) François Mitterrand, after the conservatives had won the 1993 legislative elections. The conservative Édouard Balladur was Mitterrand’s prime minister, while Alain Juppé was foreign minister. Thus France’s entire political establishment is implicated in the decisions that were taken.

Mitterrand, who was backed by the Stalinist French Communist Party and various petty-bourgeois renegades from the Trotskyist movement, was able to impose in Africa, essentially without any opposition on his left, an extraordinarily bloody neo-colonial policy.

Still today, the French political establishment tries to deny its responsibility in the genocide. During the 2019 European elections, Raphaël Glucksmann, who was leading a joint list with the PS, said that Mitterrand was responsible for the genocide. About 20 former PS ministers called upon Olivier Faure, the PS national secretary, to object to these comments and defend France’s foreign policy at the time.

This year, shortly before the yearly commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda, the conservatives in the French Senate organized on March 9 a colloquium on the Great Lakes region of Africa—a transparent provocation, as they invited speakers known for denying or minimizing the genocide of the Tutsis and dismissing historians who worked to establish France’s responsibility.

Historians face enormous difficulties in accessing French archives on the genocide, as indeed with archives regarding the crimes of French colonialism after the Second World War.

Macron granted in 2019 limited access to archives on Rwanda to a carefully selected team of researchers, the Duclert Commission, leaving out specialists of the Rwandan genocide. Predictably, the preliminary results whitewash French responsibility in these events.

On June 12, after five years of administrative battles, the State Council finally granted definitive early access to the Elysée presidential palace’s archives on Rwanda to historian François Graner, co-author of the book *The French State and the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda*. However, many archives, including notably the military archives, are still closed to researchers.



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