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Research report

Forum: United Nations Security Council

Issue: Determining the Appropriate United Nations Response to Escalating Ethnic Violence in Rwanda (1994)

Student Officer: Floranne Keulen

Position: Deputy Chair



LMUNA

Lorentz Lyceum
Model United Nations
Arnhem

LmunA 2026

Introduction

The Rwanda genocide of 1994, is a mass murder in Rwanda that happened over the course of around 100 days in April–July 1994. The genocide was conceived by extremist of Rwanda's majority Hutu population, who planned to kill the minority group Tutsi and anyone who opposed those genocidal intentions. It is estimated that around 200,000 Hutu, spurred on by propaganda from various media, participated in the genocide. More than 800,000 civilians, who were primarily Tutsi, but also moderate Hutu, were killed during the campaign. Around 2,000,000 Rwandans fled the country during or immediately after the genocide. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) maybe add some more information about why the event occurred -> why did extremist want to kill the minority group Tutsi? You also mention this in the general overview, but maybe give a short recap of that here.

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Definitions of key terms

Genocide

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

1. Killing members of the group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. [\[3\]](#)

Hutu

A Hutu is a member of a Bantu-speaking ethnic group native to the African Great Lakes region, primarily living in Rwanda and Burundi, as well as parts of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They traditionally worked as farmers and form one of the region's main population groups alongside the Tutsi and Twa. [\[4\]](#)

Tutsi

"Tutsi" is a proper noun referring to a member of a Bantu-speaking ethnic group native to Rwanda and Burundi in Central Africa. Traditionally, the Tutsi made up the minority ruling or aristocratic class and practiced cattle herding. [\[5\]](#)

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) is the ruling political party in Rwanda. Founded in 1987 by Tutsi refugees in Uganda, it launched a civil war in 1990 and took power in July 1994 by defeating the Hutu extremist forces responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi. Led by Paul Kagame, the RPF has governed Rwanda as the dominant political force ever since. [\[6\]](#)

United Nations Assistance Mission In Rwanda (UNAMIR)

UNAMIR was established by the United Nations Security Council on 1993 to help implement the Arusha Peace Agreement signed by the Rwandese parties on 4 August 1993. UNAMIR's mandate was: to assist in ensuring the security of the capital city of Kigali; monitor the ceasefire agreement, including establishment of an expanded demilitarized zone and demobilization procedures; monitor the security situation during the final period of the transitional Government's mandate leading up to elections; assist with mine-clearance; and assist in the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities in conjunction with relief operations. [\[7\]](#)

LmunA 2026

General overview

Colonial era

The major ethnic groups in Rwanda are the Hutu (accounting for more than four-fifth of the total population) and the Tutsi (one-seventh). During the colonial era, the German government, begun in 1898 and continuing until 1916, pursued a policy of indirect rule that strengthened the Tutsi ruling class and the absolutism of its monarchy. The approach continued under Belgium after World War I. [\[2\]](#)

Revolution

Some Hutu began to demand equality and started a revolution. The revolution began with an uprising on November 1, 1959, when a rumor of the death of a Hutu leader at the hands of Tutsi perpetrators led groups of Hutu to launch attacks on the Tutsi. Because tensions were already high during the colonial era, it wasn't taken lightly. Months of violence followed, and many Tutsi were killed or fled the country. A Hutu coup on January 28, 1961, which was carried out with the tacit approval of the Belgian colonial authorities, officially deposed the Tutsi king and abolished the Tutsi monarchy. Rwanda became a republic, and an all-Hutu provisional national government came into being. Independence was proclaimed the next year, although the rule from Tutsi to Hutu was not peaceful. Additional rounds of tension and violence flared periodically and led to mass killings of Tutsi in Rwanda even before the genocide took place. [\[2\]](#)

Prelude

Tension between Hutu and Tutsi flared again in 1990, when Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels invaded from Uganda. A cease-fire was negotiated in early 1991, and negotiations between the RPF and the government of president Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, began in 1992. An agreement came into existence, signed in August 1993, that the RPF would be more involved in the government. Hutu extremists were strongly opposed to the plan. They had a deep distrust towards the Tutsi which had already been widely propagated via newspapers and radio stations for a few years, which would later serve to fuel ethnic violence. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

100 days

On the evening of April 6, 1994, there was a plane carrying the president of Rwanda and Burundi. It was shot down over Kigali, Rwanda's capital. The crash killed everyone on board. Although the identity of the person or group who fired upon the plane has never been found, Hutu extremists were originally thought to be responsible. Later there were allegations that RPF leaders were responsible. The organized killing of Tutsi and moderate Hutu began that night, led by Hutu extremists. Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a moderate Hutu, was assassinated the next day, as were 10 Belgian soldiers (part of a United Nations peacekeeping force already in

LmunA 2026

the country) who were guarding her. Her murder was part of a goal to eliminate moderate Hutu or Tutsi politicians, so the government would only have Hutu extremists in it. [\[1\]](#)

The next few months saw a wave of mass killings, in which the army and Hutu military groups played a central role. Radio broadcasts further fueled the genocide by encouraging Hutu civilians to kill their Tutsi neighbors. It is estimated that some 200,000 Hutu participated in the genocide, although some were unwilling and consequently were forced to do so by the army and Hutu militia groups. The methods for killing were typically quite brutal, with crude instruments being used. Rape was also used as a weapon and included the deliberate use of perpetrators infected with HIV/AIDS to carry out sexual assaults; as a result, many Tutsi women and female children were intentionally infected with HIV/AIDS. [\[8\]](#)

The RPF were successful in securing most of the country by early July, taking Kigali on July 4. Extremist Hutu leaders fled the country. A transitional government was established on July 19, with Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu, as president and RPF leader Paul Kagame, a Tutsi, as vice president. The genocide had come to an end. [\[8\]](#)

The duration of the 1994 genocide is usually described as 100 days, although it's officially slightly more. During the genocide more than 800,000 civilians, primarily Tutsi, were killed. Some estimates, including that of the Rwandan government, are higher. As many as 2,000,000 Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi, fled, most of them into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) the great majority returned to Rwanda in late 1996 and early 1997. [\[1\]](#) [\[8\]](#)

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Major parties involved

United Nations

Maintained a diminished peacekeeping and humanitarian presence (via UNAMIR II) to stabilize the country, though it faced severe strain, including managing the aftermath. [\[1\]](#)

Rwanda

Governed by the post-genocide coalition government striving to rebuild infrastructure, integrate the military, and manage the return of refugees. [\[1\]](#)

Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) & Tanzania

Neighboring states hosting hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees (including former soldiers and militias) in massive border camps, creating high regional tension throughout 1995. [\[1\]](#)

Uganda

The rebel group RPF was formed and largely based in Uganda by exiled Tutsi's. [\[1\]](#)

France

Got authorization to launch the mission “Operation Tourquase”, a military humanitarian intervention that established a safe zone in Rwanda. This zone was the only one not occupied by the Hutu's at the end of the 100-day genocide. [\[1\]](#)

The United States

Provided post-crisis humanitarian and financial aid while navigating diplomatic engagement with the new Kigali administration. [\[1\]](#)

Belgium

Provided post-crisis humanitarian and financial aid while navigating diplomatic engagement with the new Kigali administration and contributed military personnel, leadership, medical teams, or logistical support during the 1993–1996 civil war and genocide. [\[1\]](#)

Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Ghana, New Zealand and Tunisia

During the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), these nations contributed military personnel, leadership, medical teams, or logistical support during the 1993–1996 civil war and genocide. [\[1\]](#)

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) Government

The new ruling political and military authority in Kigali, led by President Pasteur Bizimungu and Vice President/Defense Minister Paul Kagame, focused on internal security, reconstruction, and establishing state control. [\[1\]](#)

LmunA 2026

Timeline of Key Events

- October 1, 1990** The RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda, starting a civil war
- August 4, 1993** The Rwandan government and the RPF sign the Arusha Accords, a peace deal meant to establish a power-sharing government
- April 6, 1994** President Juvénal Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were killed when a rocket hit their plane near Kigali.
- April 7, 1994** The start of the genocide. The moderate Hutu Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was murdered alongside other prominent Tutsi and moderate political figures.
- April 8, 1994** The RPF launched a major civil war offense to protect its trapped officials and stop the slaughter.
- April 15-16, 1994** Thousands of Tutsis seeking refuge were massacred at the Nyarubuye Roman Catholic Church
- April 21, 1994** Due to the death of several peacekeepers, the UN drastically cuts its peacekeeping force in Rwanda
- April 7, 1994** The start of the genocide. The moderate Hutu Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was murdered alongside other prominent Tutsi and moderate political figures.
- May 15, 1994** The UNSC voted to send a larger force, though bureaucratic delays meant the deployment stalled while rapid killing kept taking place.
- June 22, 1994** The UN authorised France to launch "Operation Turquoise", a military humanitarian intervention that established a safe zone in Rwanda.
- July 4, 1994** RPF forces captured the capital city (Kigali).
- July 18, 1994** The RPF secured control over nearly the entire country except the French-controlled humanitarian zone.
- July 19, 1994** The RPF formed a new government of National Unity, officially marking the end of the 100-day genocide.

LmunA 2026

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Relief Group Actions

Non-governmental organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières attempted to manage massive refugee flows and treat the wounded, despite immense security risks and political impasses. [\[8\]](#)

French Intervention

On June 22 the UN backed the deployment of a French-led military force, known as Operation Turquoise, into Rwanda to establish a safe zone; the operation was opposed by the RPF, which claimed that France had always supported the government and policies of President Habyarimana. [\[2\]](#)

The United Nations

The United Nations, which already had peacekeeping troops in the country for a monitoring mission (UNAMIR), made unsuccessful attempts to mediate a cease-fire. On April 21, as the crisis deepened, the UN voted to reduce UNAMIR's presence in the country from 2,500 troops to 270. This is due to the mission having a goal that was said not to be achieved by sending more troops. On May 17, however, the UN reversed its decision and voted to establish a force of 5,500, composed of soldiers mainly from African countries, but those additional troops could not be immediately deployed due to bureaucratic issues. [\[7\]](#)

LmunA 2026

Possible solutions

UNAMIR

The UNAMIR requested more troops to stop the violence. Instead, the UN reduced the force size after 10 Belgian soldiers were killed. Even though they eventually expanded their force, they came largely after the genocide had taken place due to bureaucratic issues that slowed down the process. It is largely believed that if the UN were to have listened to the request at the start, many lives could've been saved.

Stop Hate Media

Sabotaging the RTL radio station would have cut off the primary tool used by extremists. As they dehumanised the Tutsi's, referring to them as many vile things, but mainly cockroaches that they needed to be rid off, used it to coordinate attacks and communicate it to a larger audience, and broadcast the locations of fleeing Tutsis.

Enforce the Arusha Accords

Western nations and regional leaders could've pressure Hutu extremist factions to genuinely implement the 1993 power-sharing peace agreement rather than stalling.

Sanction Leadership

Freezing assets and issuing travel bans on Hutu Power organizers and financiers early on would have weakened their logistics and weapon-buying capabilities. In turn, this would've made the organizers overall less capable to gain the tens of thousands of firearm weapons they eventually had.

LmunA 2026

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