

# Kagame's killing fields in Rwanda

by Linda de Hoyos

Recent reports indicate that the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) of Defense Minister Paul Kagame is carrying out an extermination campaign in northern Rwanda against returning Hutus, as he carried out against the 600,000 Hutu refugees inside Zaire during the Rwandan-Ugandan invasion of Zaire beginning October 1996.

A report has reached Western capitals that up to 8,000 Hutu farmers, many of them returning refugees, were systematically sent into flight by the Rwandan Patriotic Army from their homes in the Gisenyi region of northern Rwanda, and then hunted down, until they were entrapped inside the Nyakimana caves, where they were then murdered. The slaughter inside the massive cave, where the peasants and their families were trapped, occurred over the three days of Oct. 24-27.

The report of the mass killing comes from the Center for the Struggle against Impunity and Injustice in Rwanda, which is headed by Joseph Matata, a human rights activist inside Rwanda during the Habyarimana years, until he was chased out of the country in 1995. The Center, based in Brussels, has consistently reported on all violations of human rights that come within its purview, including those against Tutsis. It receives information from Rwanda via telephonic transmissions, and from many Tutsis who oppose the policy of genocide adopted by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

The Center names Paul Kagame as being directly responsible for the policy of mass murder in northern Rwanda now being carried out by the Rwandan Patriotic Army, which came to power in 1994. Kagame, a former director of military intelligence of Uganda—under London's warlord in the region, Ugandan dictator Yoweri Museveni—is one of those whom the *Times* of London and its minions call "the new leadership of Africa." They earned this encomium for their dedication to fulfilling London's goals of "land-clearing" through murder and raw-materials extraction, now being carried out by the British Privy Council's Commonwealth throughout the Great Rift Valley of eastern Africa.

The 8,000 men, women, and children murdered in Kanama are only the latest additions to the mountain of bodies this policy has produced in East Africa, beginning with the Ugandan Army's invasion of Rwanda in October 1990.

The Center notes that the massacre at the Nyakimana Cave matches the scale of the RPA slaughter of 8,000 men, women, and children in April 1995, when the army shut down the

Kibeho refugee camp. At that time, because United Nations and non-governmental organization workers were close to the scene, the slaughter received international attention. Only Baroness Lynda Chalker, then British Minister of Overseas Development and the chief patron of Ugandan warlord Museveni and his satellite Kagame, held by the RPF's lie that only 300 people had been killed.

In the case of the murders at the Nyakimana Cave, there has been no public outcry.

RPA officers appear to be rewarded for the destruction of civilian life, the Center has noted. One Colonel Bagire is believed to be responsible for the murder of 100 peasants in the Kayove and Bisizi sectors in September 1995, after which he received a promotion to the post of counsellor general to Defense Minister Kagame.

The communiqué from the Center also reports on the disappearance of people of Rubavu, Rwerere, and Mutera communes during the battles which took place on Oct. 8, 1997, near the Gisenyi airport in the Rubavu commune. "The Center has, based on other reports, noticed with dismay the statements of Lt. Col. Murokore, commander of the Rwandan Army's 21st Battalion based in Gisenyi. He reported on 'the disappearance of a large part of the population of the Rubavu commune, the inhabitants of certain sectors of the Rwerere and Mutera communes. They left with the insurgents at the time of the attack of October 8 at the Gisenyi airport (see *Ingabo* No. 29, pp. 18-20, monthly journal edited by the Minister of Defense for period October 1997). How is General Kagame able to . . . explain that around 8,000 inhabitants of four sectors of the Kanama commune disappeared at the same time?"

The attacks on civilians have continued since the massacre at the Nyakimana Cave. On Oct. 31, one week later, it was reported by one British outlet that "unidentified criminals" killed ten families in Rugarama sector of Kidaho commune, in Ruhengeri province, according to Rwandan government radio. No details were given, but the pattern fits that described by the Brussels Center.

Since the Kagame government has created a *cordon sanitaire* around the region of northern Rwanda, which has historically—for many centuries—been a nexus of resistance against Tutsi rule, reports of more mass deaths can be expected in the future.

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## Documentation

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*Excerpts of the Center's communiqué on the atrocity at the Nyakimana Cave follow:*

Communiqué 22/97—Center for the Struggle against Impunity and Injustice in Rwanda, Brussels, Nov. 24, 1997:

The Rwandan army massacred more than 8,000 people from four sectors of the Kanama Commune (Gisenyi) in the Nyakimana Cave between Oct. 24-27, 1997. . . . In order to escape incessant massacres by the RPA, the inhabitants of the four sectors had found refuge in the Nyakimana Cave. The entrance to the cave, situated about 5 kilometers from the communal office of Kanama and the Mahoko Market, is located in the Kayove sector.

According to the account of a witness, who had lived in the Nyakimana Cave along with the thousands of peasants massacred there, the number of victims is estimated at about 8,000. . . . The witness had been able to leave the Cave on Oct. 23 but was unable to return because the military, who were laying siege to the Cave, had cut off the road. He rushed to send an SOS to Kigali and sent a fax to his family in Belgium. It was too late; the massacre had taken place.

Between Oct. 24 and 27, 1997, the RPA military had come to indiscriminately bombard all the inhabitants (men, women, children, and the elderly) of the area who had taken refuge in the Cave. Then they completely sealed off the Cave's entrance. The Center believes that there are no survivors, including those who had tried to take refuge at the Cave's floor. Emanations of toxic gas probably coming from a volcano had always prevented explorers from reaching the Cave's bottom.

Statements issued by the RPA claiming the discovery of a web of caves at Nyakimana serving as the Command Center of the [Hutu] rebellion are totally false and are designed to protect the military responsible for committing the massacre, which is at the same level as Kibeho. Contrary to what the military has announced, the Cave did not contain any insurgents, unless all the Hutu population is considered as "insurgent."

*Imprisonment and threats against family members of those in the Cave*

Mr. Nzabandora P. Claver, president of the Kiali cooperative, was imprisoned in the Kanama commune prison, when he dared to go to the commune to claim the bodies of his children who had been killed in the Nyakimana Cave.

Messieurs Justin and Haknzimana (driver and mechanic of the Kiaka Commune) have been imprisoned under the same circumstances. . . .

### How it happened

The peasants of Kamana commune were forced to seek refuge in the Nyakimana Cave in mid-October by a series

of massacres carried out by the RPA in the area.

The bloodletting began on Aug. 8, 1997, when the RPA killed more than 300 people at the marketplace of Mahoko; another 100 people were killed on the road and paths which connect the marketplace and the neighboring sectors of Kiyove, Bisizi, Kanama, and Karambo. More than 200 detainees at the communal prison of Kanama were also slaughtered by the RPA soldiers on the afternoon of Aug. 8. Shopkeepers and businessmen in Mahoko, who had escaped death during the day of Aug. 8, were assassinated in the night of Aug. 8 and 9 and during the day of Aug. 9, 1997. . . . The Inspectors of the Judicial Police of the Kanama and Nyamyumba communes were killed. Later in the day of Aug. 8, the RPA soldiers killed between 200 and 300 prisoners of the communal jail of Rubavu (neighboring Kanama). Through the night of Aug. 8 and Aug. 9, RPA drunken soldiers pillaged all four sectors. The RPA carried out troop maneuvers in the region and witnesses have reported having heard the shooting of artillery. Artillery drawn in front of the Mahoko marketplace was shot at the crowds. These killings sent the people of all four sectors into flight.

The RPA had launched the massacres of Aug. 8 at about 10 o'clock after an invasion of the stores and restaurants of Mahoko by unidentified armed elements with small radio walkie-talkies, whom the military has called "Hutu infiltrators."

Before finding refuge in the Cave, the people had found some peaceful shelter (at the end of August 1997) in the mountainous areas of Muhondo and Kigarama along the asphalt road situated at the edge of Kanama Commune near the forest of Muhungwe. The communal administration had given them an area and workplace in the Kigarama sector. Meanwhile, the communal buildings were used by the RPA troops, who continued to launch attacks against unarmed civilians under the pretext of "pursuing" the Hutu infiltrators.

Toward mid-October, the RPA troops started attacking those who had taken flight in the sectors of Mukondo and Keghara, forcing them to return to the war zone from which they had fled. At the least sign of resistance, the soldiers fired into the crowd and fired machine guns at the people, pushing them toward the Nyakimana Cave in the Kiyove sector at the bottom of the Kiyove Commune. Several families have lamented the number of dead killed in the hills of Mukondo and Kigarama.

Remark: In the Kigarama and Mukondo sectors, the displaced people have lived in peace. There, they were not attacked by the RPA nor by the rebels. The population verified, with surprise, that the phenomenon of "infiltrators" was linked with the presence of the RPA soldiers. Curiously, the attacks attributed to the infiltrators always took place in the zones occupied by the RPA soldiers as if the same soldiers attracted the infiltrators! The confrontations always end with a higher number of civilian deaths than the Army.