

JUSTICE

Ex-Rwandan general wanted by Spain for war crimes detained in London

Former army official faces charges in the murders of three Spanish aid workers in 1994

MANUEL ALTOZANO | Madrid | 23 JUN 2015 - 17:35 CEST



High Court Judge Fernando Andreu. / KIKE PARA

Just as a Spanish court investigation into genocide committed in Rwanda was about to fizzle out, British authorities announced that they have captured a former top general from the African country who is under investigation for war crimes by Spain's High Court.

Emmanuel Karake Karenzi is being held in London after he was arrested when he entered Britain about a week ago.

In 2008, Spanish High Court Judge Fernando Andreu prosecuted Karenzi for charges including genocide, crimes against humanity and terrorism committed in Rwanda during the 1994-2000 conflict.

As a leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) party, Karenzi is allegedly responsible for the 1997 murders of Spanish aid workers Flors Sirera, Manuel Madrazo and Luis Valtueña.

According to a High Court indictment, Karenzi "knew about and approved" the killings which took place in Ruhengeri, in north Rwanda.

Sirera, Madrazo and Valtueña had been helping the survivors of the massacre of a Hutu tribe, in which 50 people were killed at the hands of the FPR.

A resident in the rural community purportedly showed the Spanish aid workers the mass graves where the guerrillas dumped the bodies of all their victims.

Four soldiers from the Tutsi-led army entered the residence and began shooting at the aid workers

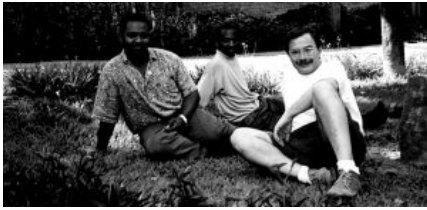
Two days later, four soldiers from the Tutsi-led army entered the residence where the members of the NGO Médicos del Mundo (Doctors Without Borders) were staying and began shooting at the aid workers.

The attack was planned during a meeting between Karenzi and his intelligence officers, a witness testified before Andreu. They were killed because "the white people had sensitive information about the massacres carried out by the FPR," the witness said.

In the 2008 indictment, in which Karenzi is prosecuted along with 38 other members of the FPR, details are given about assassination plots in the Rwandan capital Kigali and other crimes committed against the Hutu tribes by the Tutsis.

Judge Andreu has also blamed Karenzi for the ethnic cleansing of the Hutu populations in Nyakinama and Mukingo in the north of the country.

Once the High Court is formally notified by Britain that it has captured Karenzi – according to the BBC he was arrested at Heathrow airport on Saturday – the judge will send a European arrest warrant so that the former general can be sent to Madrid to testify in the case.



Médicos del Mundo aid worker Manuel Madrazo (right).

But the following procedures – including whether Andreu will be able to continue his investigation – remain unclear due to the recent restrictions placed on the courts by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy’s government on the [universal justice doctrine](#), and which were approved by the PP-majority Congress last year.

Under the reform, judges can open investigations against a suspected human rights violator if the defendant “is Spanish or a foreigner who frequently resides in Spain,” or who is currently in the country and

Spanish authorities have refused to allow their extradition.

Rajoy came under [pressure by China](#) after another High Court judge issued arrest warrants for former President Jiang Zemin, 88, former Prime Minister Li Peng, 86, and other Chinese Communist Party members on genocide charges related to government crackdowns that took place in Tibet.

Several other human rights abuse cases have been dismissed under the reform.

The Karenzi case could have also been shelved after the High Court said that it may not be able to enforce the charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity based on the changes to the universal justice code. However, if Karenzi is sent to Madrid he will be physically in Spanish territory and can be charged with these crimes.

Following the Rwandan conflict, Karenzi became an important figure in the government of Paul Kagame, who came to office in 2000.

In 2007, he became commander of one of the African Union’s operations and the United Nations African peace-keeping mission UNAMID in Darfur.

In October 2008, seven months after the Spanish indictment was made public, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon agreed to keep Karenzi at the head of UNAMID for an extended seven months but asked the Rwandan government to replace him when his assignment was up.

In April 2010, President Kagame expelled him from the army and ordered his arrest for “immoral conduct” and for making contact with the enemies of the regime.



Luis Valtueña, standing in the center, in a photo taken in December 1996. / COVER

The High Court had alerted Washington, Brussels and London on several occasions about his visits to those cities but his arrest wasn’t made until this week.

Apart from the murders of the three aid workers, six other Spaniards lost their lives during the Rwandan conflict. Joaquín Vallmajó and Servando García, both Catholic priests, were kidnapped, tortured and killed by FPR while they were in a refugee camp. Vallmajó had denounced the crimes committed by the Tutsis against the Hutus.



Father Joaquín Vallmajó, who was kidnapped and killed in April 1994.