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Spain seeks extradition of Rwandan general

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Spain is seeking the extradition on genocide charges of a former Rwandan general who has been the target of two assassination plots while in exile in South Africa, but Rwanda said it should have priority in prosecuting him.

Spain's cabinet agreed Friday to seek General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa's extradition from South Africa, where he is living in exile.

A Spanish judge charged General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa - along with 39 other members of the military - with genocide and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the lead-up to and during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda in which 800,000 people were killed.

Spain's National Court also charged him with the murder in Rwanda of a Spanish missionary in 1994 and three Spanish aid workers three years later.

Attacks

Nyamwasa fled to South Africa in February after abandoning his post as Rwanda's envoy to India.

Four months later he was shot in the stomach outside his home in an upmarket Johannesburg suburb, in an incident that has strained ties with Kigali after foreign operatives were suspected in the attack. A South African prosecutor said there was a second plot to kill the general while he was in the hospital.

His wife Rosette has said she believes Rwandan President Paul Kagame was behind the attack which she has described as a politically motivated assassination attempt.

The Rwandan government has accused Nyamwasa, and former army colonel Patrick Karegeya, of masterminding grenade attacks earlier this year in the run-up to the country's presidential elections in August.

Rwanda's foreign affairs minister, Louise Mushikiwabo, rejected allegations that her government had tried to kill General Nyamwasa, who is accused in Rwanda of trying to destabilise Mr Kagame's government.

Spanish inquiry

A Spanish judge in February 2008 indicted 40 Rwandan Tutsi soldiers on charges of genocide and war crimes in Rwanda. The high-ranking officers can be prosecuted in Spain because Spanish citizens also fell victim to violence in Rwanda.

Judge Fernando Andreu's indictment was the first ever charging Tutsis from the Rwandan Patriotic Front with war crimes committed in Rwanda during and after the mass killings of 1994. The soldiers have been indicted for the murder of nine Spaniards in a Hutu refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

According to Judge Andreu, there was enough evidence against the 40 Rwandan soldiers to try them in Spain. They include leading members of the military, among them Karenzi Karake, former deputy commander of the joint UN/African Union peacekeeping mission in Sudan.

The Spanish judge said - while announcing the indictments in 2008- that there also was enough evidence to bring serious charges against Rwandan President Paul Kagame. However, he was not formally indicted because he enjoys immunity as a sitting head of state.

In 2004 a French judge called for Mr Kagame and the RPF to be tried for the murder of former president Juvenal Habyarimana in 1994. It was the shooting down of the president's plane that sparked the genocide that year.

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Links:

Images:

[i1] Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa -- <http://www.rnw.nl/data/files/images/lead/kayumba.jpg>

[i2] <http://www.rnw.nl/>