

UFDR: UN Inquiry leaves many questions unasked

The Union of Rwandan Democratic Forces (UFDR) called upon the United Nations to put an end to the genocide ongoing in Rwanda, in a release on the UN Inquiry Report. The UFDR's chairman is Faustin Twagimurungu, the first Prime Minister of the new Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) regime, who left Rwanda in 1995 along with then-Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga, because of the widespread killing of Hutus and others by the RPF. The UFDR is a coalition of the Resistance Forces for Democracy, the Group Initiative for Reconciliation, and the Rally for the Return of the Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda. Here are excerpts from the UFDR statement of Jan. 5:

In its report, the Commission [of Inquiry] emphasizes the grave failings of the Security Council, of the UN Secretary General, as well as the responsibility of some countries such as the United States, Great Britain, France, and Belgium. On this general point of view, the report constitutes an important element that should have come earlier.

However, this element is particularly useful today, because it corroborates the position many times expressed by UFDR member organizations on one side, and allows

on the other side, to understand the disconcerting apathy of the United Nations Organization and the destabilizing role of some countries in the terrible crisis currently devastating the African Great Lakes region.

The UFDR, however, considers that many questions that should have been addressed by the Commission were held in abeyance, notably that of the perpetrator and possible accomplices in the murder attempt that claimed the lives of two heads of state, the Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and the Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira. That attack, as pointed out in many parts of this Commission's report, served as a detonator of the Rwandan genocide. Furthermore, the UFDR finds regrettable the fact that the Commission has confined itself on the April to July 1994 period, whereas the UNAMIR mission goes well beyond this point.

The UFDR is also amazed that on the Rwandan side, the report is based on evidence collected from one side in the conflict, that is, the Rwandan Patriotic Front and its collaborators. Until proven otherwise, one may think that the Commission has deliberately refused to meet personalities in exile who were members of the two successive transition governments before the assassination of President Habyarimana, as well as members of the first RPF government who had to flee the country due to the deliberate RPF policy of pursuing the massacres of innocent civilian populations. Such an attitude cannot in any way contribute to the reconciliation.

On April 21, the Council voted unanimously to reduce UNAMIR to 270. The British responded to the African and Non-Aligned Movement position by declaring that strengthening UNAMIR was not feasible because of "the lesson drawn from Somalia that conditions on the ground could evolve rapidly and dangerously."

On May 3, the United States gained some support to send a Security Council team to the region, "an idea the United Kingdom objected to, and which was not pursued. The Council president suggested that the Council write to the Secretary General asking him to submit contingency planning to the Council and a recommendation on the mandate for an expanded UN presence. At the suggestion of the United Kingdom, the request was not formalized but worded as a request for a non-paper." The letter further stipulated that the Council "did not expect any firm or definitive recommendations."

However, on May 4, from Rwanda the UNAMIR command was demanding strengthening of the peacekeeping force in order to "first and foremost be enabled to stop the killings, and secondly, continue efforts to reach a cease-fire." But the non-paper for the Security Council called for a 5,000-

man force mandated "to provide support and ensure safety for displaced and other affected persons and for safe delivery of humanitarian assistance."

The RPF declared on May 12 that a UNAMIR force of 5,000 was too large and only 2,500 were required, and those could only be deployed in zones not under the control of the RPF.

Nevertheless, on June 8, the Security Council adopted Resolution 905, which expanded UNAMIR for the humanitarian mission and extended its mandate to Dec. 9. But this proved to be impossible to organize. By June 19, the UN had only been able to recruit a force of 503. At this point, France and Senegal stepped in with an offer to send their own forces to carry out the UNAMIR mission and to "establish safe, humanitarian zones," until such point as UNAMIR could be deployed. On June 22, at the urging of the Secretary General, the Security Council authorized the French-Senegalese mission, or Operation Turquoise, and by the end of the month the French were carving out a "safe zone" in the Cyangugu-Kibuye-Gikongoro triangle in southwestern Rwanda, where they briefly clashed with the RPF on July 3.