



Timeline: Rwanda

1885 – At the Berlin Conference of European Powers, Germany is given control of the area that includes Rwanda.

1894 – The first European explorers arrive in Rwanda.

1916 – Belgium takes over the country but relies on the traditional hierarchy to run the country, it uses the Tutsis to run the including the king who is recognised by both Tutsis and Hutus.

1926 – The Belgians introduce ethnic identity cards.

1933 - A census is carried out by the Belgians and Identity Cards become compulsory. They must state the owner's ethnic identity which is now fixed from birth.

1957 – Publication of Hutu Manifesto, which denounces the Tutsis who currently dominate the Rwandan leadership. The PARMEHUTU (Party for the Emancipation of the Hutu's) is formed.

1959 - The king of Rwanda dies and the Hutus, supported by the Belgians rise up against the Tutsi nobility. Thousands of Tutsis are killed and thousands more flee to the neighbouring countries. The Belgians switch their overall support to the Hutu's.

1960 – In Rwanda's first municipal elections the Hutu's get the majority.

1961 – The monarchy is abolished by a referendum and a republic is announced. The Tutsis are attacked again.

1962 - Rwanda is granted independence from Belgium. George Kayibanda of the PARMEHUTU Hutu nationalist party comes to power.

1963 - Tutsis who were forced to flee in 1959 attack Rwanda from neighbouring countries. Tutsis are attacked by Hutu's in Rwanda in retaliation. More Tutsi's leave.

1967 – More massacres against the Tutsi's from the Hutu's in Rwanda.

1973 – The Hutu leaders push Tutsi's out of their jobs in schools and the universities. Major Juvenal Habyarimana takes power and creates a one party state. Ethnic quotas are introduced into the public services. Tutsi's are only allowed 9% of available jobs.

1975 – Habyarimana forms the MRND party and gives preferences to jobs to Hutus.

1986 – Tutsis in exile in neighbouring Uganda form the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front); membership of the RPF initially involves those who helped to overthrow the Ugandan dictator, Milton Obote.

1989 – World economic problems (especially the fall in coffee prices, one of Rwandans chief exports) increase the pressures on Rwandan economy. In turn, this increases poverty and creates discontent.

1990 – October; RPF rebels invade in the hope of creating a power-sharing situation with Habyarimana. They are opposed by government troops – the FAR (Rwandan Armed Forces) – equipped and trained by France and Zaire.

1991 – March; a cease-fire is declared. Recognising they need motivated support, the FAR begins training and equipping civilian militia known as 'interahamwe', meaning 'those who stand together'.

1991/2 – Local persecutions of Tutsis, including murders, are carried out.

1993 – August: following months of negotiations, Habyarimana and the RPF sign a peace and power sharing agreement – the Arusha Peace Accord. 2,500 U.N. troops are deployed to Rwanda to oversee its implementation, under the command of Canadian General Romeo Dallaire.

1993/4 – President Habyarimana delays implementation of power sharing; training of interahamwe increases. The extremist Hutu radio station, 'Radio Mille Collines' starts broadcasting calls to attack Tutsis.

1994 – April; President Habyarimana restates his commitment to the Arusha Peace Accords. Extremist Hutus are alarmed by this development.

1994 – April 6th; President Habyarimana's aeroplane is shot down. He and the President of neighbouring Burundi are killed. The blame is placed on the Tutsis. Massacres of Tutsis begin.

1994 – April 7th; the FAR and the interahamwe set up roadblocks. They round up thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutu politicians, including women and children; most are massacred using 'pangas' – machete-like weapons. U.N. forces are forbidden to intervene, being only allowed to 'monitor' the situation.

1994 – April 21st – 10 Belgian soldiers are killed; the UN reduces its forces in the country from 2,500 to 250.

1994 – April 30th – the situation is debated in the United Nations Security Council. They refuse to declare it a 'genocide', which would mean they would be forced to intervene.

1994 – May 17th; the U.N. agrees to send 6,800 troops and policemen, mostly African, to Rwanda with powers to defend civilians, although this is delayed because of arguments over who will pay the bill and provide the equipment. A Security Council resolution says "acts of genocide may have been committed."

1994 – June 22nd; after an initial reluctance, led by the USA delegation, the UN agrees that the killing constitutes officially a 'genocide'. No troops have arrived in Rwanda. French forces are to be despatched to the south west of Rwanda to create a 'safe-haven' (although killing will continue here, too).

1994 – July 17th; the RPF invasion troops reach the capital, Kigali. The massacres finally stop.

The Hutu extremists and interahamwe leaders escape to refugee camps in nearby countries, where they are placed alongside Tutsi refugees. In many cases, these men continue to exercise power within the camps and the killing of Tutsis continues. It is the crisis of refugee movement around Africa that makes the world 'wake up' to the genocide.

Between 800,000 and 1,071,00 Tutsis, and including some moderate Hutus, were murdered. Many more were mutilated, maimed or physically scarred for life. The mental anguish and the trauma cannot be measured. A steady number of people have been convicted in the International Court of Justice; those Tutsis who returned have been encouraged to assist in the 'closure' process of Rwanda through local hearings or 'grass courts' (gachacha).