



ODUMUNC 2011
Issue Brief for the
GA Fourth Committee: Special Political (SPECPOL)

Rwanda: Responding to the Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

After genocidal violence in 1994 by the Hutu-dominated government killed some 800,000 ethnic Tutsis, the international community displayed great sympathy when the Tutsi-dominated insurgency led by Paul Kagame took over the country. Rwanda has received strong support for foreign donors and made impressive economic and political progress. It also became mired in the wars of neighboring Democratic Republic Congo (DRC), helping to overthrow the government of Kinshasa in 1997 and assuming effective control over the eastern regions of the country.

A draft report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) found that Rwanda was heavily implicated in mass killing of Hutus in the DRC. The report, covering the period 1993-2003, found that violence against Hutu refugees from Rwanda was most severe across the Rwandan border in eastern Congo in 1996 and 1997. Hundreds of incidents are documented in the 545 page report, involving the killing of tens of thousands of civilian refugees. The report was leaked, in French only, possibly because its authors feared its findings would be diluted. One month later, it has been made available, [DRC: Mapping human rights violations 1993-2003](#). Selected findings are available at [“Bombshell UN report leaked”](#) (also listed below).

The UNHCHR report came at a moment of heightened sensitivity. Criticism of Rwanda has risen through the summer of 2010 because of questions about dedication to democracy. The election in August 2010, won by the ruling party of President Paul Kagame with 93% of the vote, was widely criticized for intimidation of the opposition. The report also questioned the moral status of a government previously assured global sympathy.

A Rwandan government spokesman called the UN draft "malicious, offensive and ridiculous." Rwanda threatened to remove its troops from UN peacekeeping missions, including its contingent of 3,500 in Sudan. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights postponed release of the report after the official protests. The UN now faces internal pressure and demands from many member states to authorize release of the original report.

Many countries, especially in Europe and Latin America, as well as others such as Australia and Canada, insist that global standards must be developed to protect the innocent everywhere. They have pushed for aggressive action by the UN, but also appreciate the need to maintain consensus on unrelated issues like peacekeeping. The quickest path for action might be by individual countries. In Spain, where law allows prosecution of human rights violation anywhere, a judge charged Rwandan Gen. Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa and three dozen members of the military in 2008 with the mass killings of Hutu civilians in 1994. There also might be an independent role for further investigation and prosecution by the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands.



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Other countries are more divided. African countries are generally hesitant to criticize each other. China and Russia typically try to avoid consideration of such issues, suspicious of anything that would question state sovereignty or create precedents that could be used against them. The United States also approaches the issue gingerly, afraid a precedent could be created to criticism of Israel or its own wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and against terror elsewhere.

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[Rwanda's Election: President Paul Kagame under scrutiny](#), *The Economist*, 5 August 2010.

[Rwanda and other aid darlings: Efficiency versus freedom](#), *The Economist*, 5 August 2010.

[Bombshell UN report leaked: 'Crimes of genocide' against Hutus in Congo](#), in the *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 August 2010.

[Leaked UN report accuses Rwanda of possible genocide in Congo](#), *Guardian*, 26 August 2010.

[Rwanda threatens UN over DR Congo 'genocide' report](#), *BBC*, 28 August 2010.

[Revisiting the killing fields: A leaked UN report looks very bad for Rwanda's government](#), *The Economist*, 2 September 2010.

[The Kagame Dilemma](#), *New York Times*, 8 September 2010.

[U.N. report on Congo massacres draws anger from several countries](#), *New York Times*, 2 October 2010, p. A5.

[DRC: Mapping human rights violations 1993-2003](#). UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2010.

Country background: [Rwanda in the New York Times](#) and [Rwanda profile on the BBC](#)

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