

September 18, 2006

Renowned Rwandan Singer Goes on Trial

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 12:49 p.m. ET

ARUSHA, Tanzania (AP) -- A renowned Rwandan singer went on trial Monday before a [U.N.](#) tribunal, accused of writing lyrics that incited murders during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Simon Bikindi "chose to use his fame to incite hatred," prosecutor Hassan Jallow said during opening statements before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

The sight of the singer on trial was unusual, but the key role of propaganda in the Rwandan genocide has been well-documented. In 2003, the U.N. tribunal convicted two broadcasters and a newspaper editor of genocide, incitement to genocide, crimes against humanity, and extermination and persecution because of information that was broadcast and printed.

The organizers of the genocide that killed more than 500,000 people in 100 days used radio as a means of urging Hutu civilians to kill their Tutsi neighbors and direct the slaughter.

"Between 1990 and 1994, Simon Bikindi composed, sang, recorded or distributed musical works extolling Hutu solidarity and accusing Tutsis of enslaving Hutus," the tribunal indictment stated.

Jallow told The Associated Press that three of Bikindi's songs are at the heart of the trial, one of which calls on Hutus to remember the suffering under the Tutsi monarchy. The others urge Hutus to remain united against the "Tutsi enemy" and to be vigilant.

Bikindi, 52, has said he is innocent of the six counts of genocide and related charges.

The genocide started hours after Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane was mysteriously shot down over Kigali on April 6, 1994, as he returned home from peace talks with Tutsi-led rebels.

Militants from the Hutu ethnic majority, known as interahamwe, quickly set up roadblocks across Kigali and on April 7 began killing Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Bikindi is known for his work starting the Irindiro Ballet, famous for its blend of tribal singing and dancing. He also was an official in the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the 1980s.

The U.N. tribunal, which does not impose the death penalty, has convicted 26 suspects and acquitted four. Trials are under way for 28 others.

Copyright 2006 The Associated Press

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)