

HUTU TEN COMMANDMENTS

'Hutu Ten Commandments' were initially published in Rwandan, in native language, in December 1990 by a small newspaper called Kangura in Kigali, the capital of that country.¹ It is hard to precisely pinpoint the author of that publication but in 2003, The Chief Editor of Kangura, Hassan Ngeze was sentenced to 35 years in prison by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for genocide and crimes against humanity.² He was said to be responsible for the publication of the texts containing hate speech directed at the Tutsi ethnic group in Rwanda, who became the victims of the genocide in 1994. Kangura was responsible for publishing entire lists of people who were to be immediately exterminated.³ The number of people killed may exceed one million, although determining the exact figure is difficult. Official estimates state that over 800 000 were killed.⁴

'Hutu Ten Commandments' consists of several, or even dozens of rules that every Hutu should follow, it includes general phrases such as 'The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi'⁵ and more specific ones such as the prohibition 'Lends or borrows money from a Tutsi'.⁶ The way the article from Kangura was formed was to refer to number ten. As a consequence, it was possible to use the title to bring the focus to how small the number of rules was that a true Hutu should follow. It is also clear that this refers to the Ten Commandments in Christianity. Therefore, if a true Christian can remember and follow ten rules, then why would a true Hutu be unable to remember and recollect at any moment Hutu's Ten Commandments? In reality, far more than ten rules were deliberately included. The use of the term 'Commandments' was intentional as well. It elevates the solemnity of the text and even points to its sanctity. It is important, that Rwanda, as a region in Africa was colonised by Germany in 1894.⁷ Over 90 percent of the society follows Christian religion.⁸ It is no accident then, that by issuing the article in 1990, Kangura intentionally alluded to the divine origin of the text, in a way making the reader feel that following the rules was not only a moral thing to do but also in accordance with the will of a Higher Power.

The 'Hutu Ten Commandments' remain important, because four years after its publication, in as little as 100 days a hard-to-comprehend genocide took place. The article being allowed to be printed paints a vivid image of the feelings amongst the society in Rwanda even before then. The Tutsi made up around 20 percent of the society, Hutu were the majority, as the third ethnic group – Twa, did not even make up a 1 percent of the society.⁹ Historically, Tutsi were usually the richest, most educated and held the highest posts. This was due to the favour extended to them by Belgians and Germans during the colonial period when Rwanda was part of German East Africa.

The tensions amongst the society in Rwanda remained high even during the Hutu revolution in 1959, when over 100 000 Tutsi were forced to leave the country's borders.¹⁰ This caused a

1 United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, *Transcript: ICTR-99-52*, <<https://ucr.irmct.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/ICTR-99-52/TRS20270R0000629611.DOC>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

2 United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, *Transcript: ICTR-99-52*.

3 Ibid.

4 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Rwanda Genocide of 1994*, <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

5 University of Wales Trinity Saint David, *Primary Sources*, „Hutu Ten Commandments”, <<https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=10116§ion=12>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

6 University of Wales Trinity Saint David, *Primary Sources*, „Hutu Ten Commandments”.

7 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Rwanda: Rwanda under German and Belgian Control*, <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Rwanda/Rwanda-under-German-and-Belgian-control>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

8 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Rwanda*, <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Rwanda>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

9 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Rwanda*.

10 Ibid.

decrease in the number of people amongst the richest group, yet most of the funds remained in the hands of the Tutsi. At this point, it is important to mention, that after the revolution, the administration of the country remained officially and formally in the hands of the Hutu and their leader Grégoire Kayibanda who in 1960 became the president of the country. This is also the moment when Rwanda gained official independence.¹¹ The independence, reclaimed mostly thanks to Hutu's efforts, as well as the previously privileged position of the Tutsi, were most likely the true cause of the tensions amongst the society of Rwanda. A belief that they deserved more gained momentum amongst the Hutu ethnic group, and in turn created a belief that their financial situation was not as good as they hoped was the Tutsi's fault. The 'Hutu Ten Commandments' published by Hassan Ngeze in 1990 clearly shows how seriously the tensions should be treated and how deeply the hate speech of 'Hutu should stop having mercy' has ran,¹² as was clearly evidenced by that part of the text.

The publication of 'Hutu Ten Commandments' was a major step, creating a chain of events resulting in a gruesome, tragic death of around one million people.

The tensions between the Tutsi and Hutu grew in strength. In October of 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which demanded the return of the Tutsi's influential position, including a guarantee of safety for them, as well as the right to return for those banished abroad during the revolution of 1959, led to Rwanda being attacked by the territory of Uganda.¹³ The civil war ended on the 4th of August 1993, when President Juvénala Habyariman of Hutu origin signed the agreement with Rwandan Patriotic Front, causing a severe reduction of the Presidential power and rights, as well as condemned all extremist Hutu factions.¹⁴ As a result, he was named a traitor by the extremist groups.

In reality, Kangura's publication was financed by the government¹⁵, much like the technical preparation of the Hutu for large-scale genocide.¹⁶ The government financed the training of the Interahamwe¹⁷ and Impuzamugambi¹⁸ militias, as well as the purchase of vast quantities of weapons, including machetes, which were delivered to Hutu households, most of which were engaged primarily in agriculture. The distribution of the machetes for the farmers was meant to avoid attention because of the type of work they did.

The tragedy occurred in as little as a hundred days. It is hard to grasp how rapidly the situation escalated following the ignition point – widely recognised as the 6th of April 1994. On that day, president Juvénala Habyariman was killed in the attack on his plane.¹⁹ It is also the day the hundred days of the massacre in Rwanda is counted from. Officially acknowledged as Genocide and a Crime against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal.

It is important to differentiate between military actions during which people die on the battlefield and convincing your nation to commit mass murder. After all, it is essential to convince

11 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Rwanda: Rwanda under German and Belgian Control*, <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Rwanda/Rwanda-under-German-and-Belgian-control>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

12 University of Wales Trinity Saint David, *Primary Sources*, „Hutu Ten Commandments”, <<https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=10116§ion=12>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

13 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Rwandan Patriotic Front*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rwandan-Patriotic-Front>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

14 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Juvénal Habyarimana*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Juvenal-Habyarimana>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

15 United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, *Transcript: ICTR-99-52*, <<https://ucr.irmct.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/ICTR-99-52/TRS20270R0000629611.DOC>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

16 Alison Des Forges, 'Confronting Evil: Genocide in Rwanda', YouTube, 11 January 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h3vJJWRcFE>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

17 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Interahamwe*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Interahamwe>> [accessed 13 April 2025].

18 Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Interahamwe*.

19 Alison Des Forges, 'Confronting Evil: Genocide in Rwanda'.

the masses to agree to such a heinous, unimaginable act, for that to happen. 'Hutu Ten Commandments' is important due to the power of its propaganda. It is also a cruel reminder, of how far a person can fall due to propaganda.

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