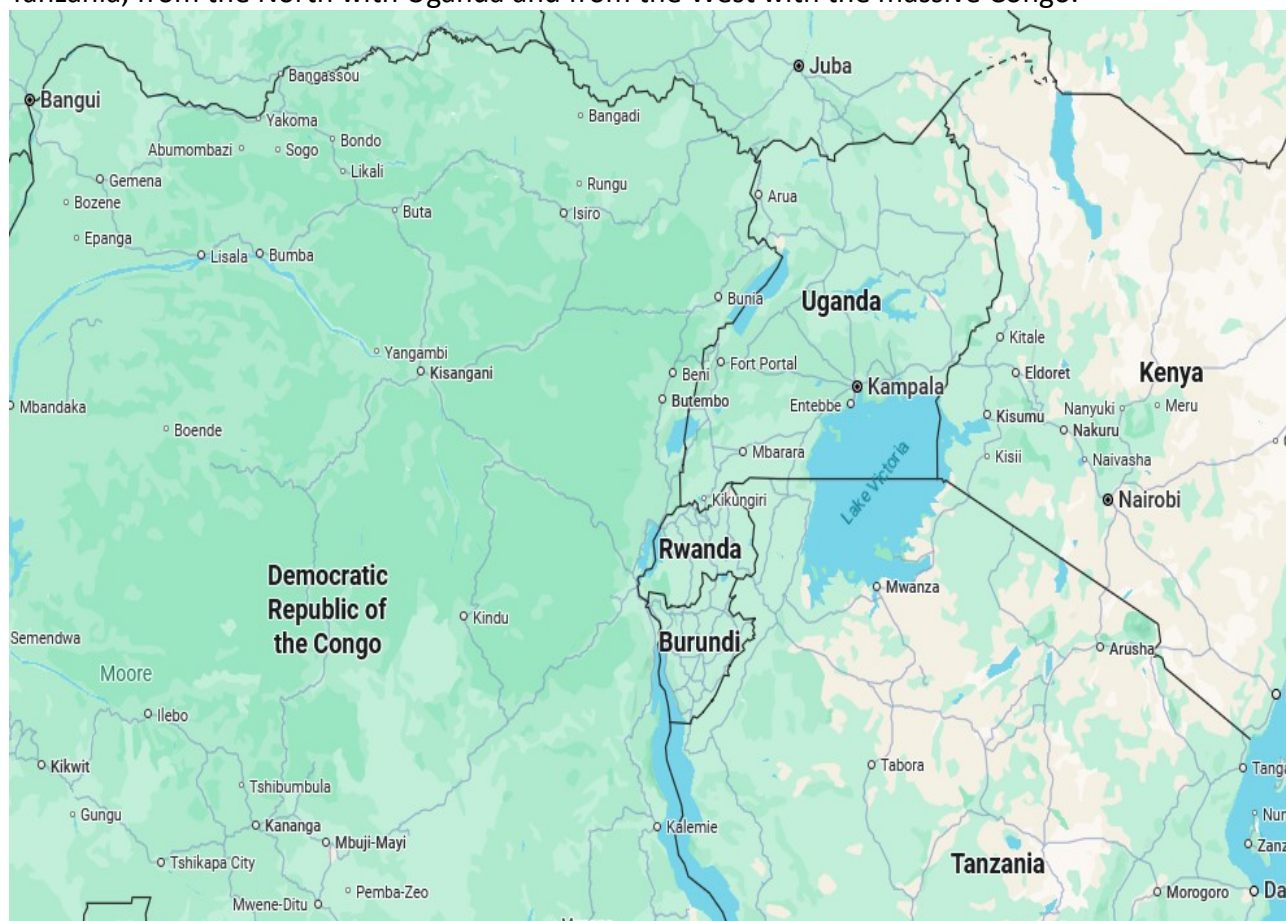


Rwanda: What could be?

The subject of genocide in Rwanda will never be simple to explain. The problem comes from many factors, some of which are not connected to Rwanda but to genocide as such, the Holocaust or Cambodia, allows us to analyse other examples of this. Possibly the biggest issue in this matter will always remain human insensitivity. It is not true that everyone was evil, or that everyone committed murder, but it is true that a system allowed for actions that exceeded human understanding and as the book *Historical Media Memories of the Rwandan Genocide* says, people themselves were unhappy with the amount of information about fights and murders in a country far removed from theirs.¹ Today, we look at this from the perspective of shame, grief, and a feeling that more could be done, but going back to the 90s, Western society was not as interested in African issues. On top of this, those were problems they started on said continent themselves. Sweden originally broadcast the issues quite fiercely, only to later briefly mention them on television.² Why? Possibly the answer is simpler than anyone could imagine, maybe they simply did not wish to see or hear about this anymore.

Rwanda itself is a small country located in the central part of the African continent. In the South, it shares the border with the small country of Burundi, from East with the country of Tanzania, from the North with Uganda and from the West with the massive Congo.



Map of Rwanda and its neighbouring countries.³

- 1 Tommy Gustafsson, „Swedish Television News in 1994”, *Historical Media Memories of the Rwandan Genocide: Documentaries, Films, and Television News* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024).
- 2 Tommy Gustafsson, „Swedish Television News in 1994”, p. 6.
- 3 Google Maps, *Rwanda*, map, 2025, <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@-2.5354741,29.0206841,6z?hl=en&entry=tu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDcxNi4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D> [Accessed 21st of July 2025].

Another subject, often brought up in Alison Des Forges' interview, is the aspect of finances. Rwanda is a small country, for most people, somewhere at the end of the world. Therefore, why did the Pentagon or even President Bill Clinton do nothing to stop such horrifying murders? As Alison mentions, back then, no one asked for any military intervention, it would suffice to simply shut down the radio broadcasting the Tutsi's location. Was this so expensive? The question, even though harsh, is who truly should be judged? The political leaders of Rwanda, calling for mass murders, or maybe (although not on the same scale), the people in authority who, whilst aware of this, have decided to do nothing.

The report from the 11th of January 1994 leaves no doubts. A desperate plea for help, a detailed plan, the gravity of the situation acknowledged by the commanders who received it... and yet nothing.



A small child looking at the dead, reflecting the tragedy of the situation.⁴

What would tell us the most about this tragedy? The things said by the reporters? Academic treatises? Books? Or maybe a photograph by an unknown author at the beginning of Alison Forges' film, where a small boy stands over a mass grave and, not even with tears, but with the expression on his face, tells us more than any sort of report could.

Looking at the boy, a person wishes to take him away from there, to comfort him, give him a hug and say that everything will be okay... Only, it will not, and sweet words and nice gestures will not do a thing to help, as he has already lost everything at that point.

Even the first point of the report from the 11th of January 1994 clearly states:

FORCE COMMANDER PUT IN CONTACT WITH INFORMANT BY VERY VERY IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT POLITICIAN. INFORMANT IS A TOP LEVEL TRAINER IN THE CADRE OF INTERAHAMWE-ARMED MILITIA OF MRND⁵

4 Human Rights Watch, *Confronting Evil: Genocide In Rwanda*, YouTube Recording, 2014, <<https://youtu.be/0h3vJJWRcFE?t=42>> [Accessed: 21st of July 2025].

5 United Nations, *Cable From Romeo Dallaire To United Nations Headquarters, 11 January 1994*, 1994, <<https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=652474>> [Accessed: 21st of July 2025].

- Is this nothing more than a joke? Interahamwe clearly informed what would happen in Rwanda. It is not some farmer met on the way, who shares a conspiracy theory with a passerby. It is a very serious report from a member of INTERAHAMWE.

In the point 4 we can read:

INFORMANT IS A FORMER SECURITY MEMBER OF THE PRESIDENT. HE ALSO STATED HE IS PAID RF150,000 PER MONTH BY THE MRND PARTY TO TRAIN INTERAHAMWE. DIRECT LINK IS TO CHIEF OF STAFF RGF AND PRESIDENT OF THE MRND FOR FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT⁶

What should be said then? Was the cost of suppressing the broadcast too high for the Pentagon? That the well-respected President Bill Clinton, also one of the best friends of President Boris Yeltsin, learns of all of this and simply says, 'let's wait'? Of course, it can be said that, after all, Rwanda had a recognised governmental authority, there was a president, there were officers, agents and possibilities, but that person was no longer there. He disappeared forever, and no one who could, even partially, minimise the conflict, ever appeared again.

In his place came murderers.

At first, the Germans and then, first and foremost, the Belgians could enter the foreign, already set in its ways, country and begin to enforce their rules. The answer is simple – money. Human lives and pain hold no value when put against the vast sums of money.

Why divide Hutu and Tutsi? Why divide them when, for centuries, they lived together peacefully and never had the idea to create artificial segregation.

In the point 5 we can read:

INTERAHAMWE HAS TRAINED 1700 MEN IN RGF MILITARY CAMPS OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL. THE 1700 ARE SCATTERED IN GROUPS OF 40 THROUGHOUT KIGALI. SINCE UNAMIR DEPLOYED HE HAS TRAINED 300 PERSONNEL IN THREE WEEK TRAINING SESSIONS AT RGF CAMPS. TRAINING FOCUS WAS DISCIPLINE, WEAPONS, EXPLOSIVES, CLOSE COMBAT AND TACTICS.⁷

6. PRINCIPAL AIM OF INTERAHAMWE IN THE PAST WAS TO PROTECT KIGALI FROM RPF. SINCE UNAMIR MANDATE HE HAS BEEN ORDERED TO REGISTER ALL TUTSI IN KIGALI. HE SUSPECTS IT IS FOR THEIR EXTERMINATION. EXAMPLE HE GAVE WAS THAT IN 20 MINUTES HIS PERSONNEL COULD KILL UP TO 1000 TUTSIS.⁸

How to interpret this paragraph? Is there anything of value to add?

It could be cruelly said that wild Africa has to deal with its own problems somehow. That Europe is still dealing with the results of the Cold War, that the United States, and even Japan and Sweden, have their own problems and adding problems of some far-removed country on top of them is not exactly in their best interest. Possibly, such statements could hold a grain of truth, but Africa, and especially Rwanda, did not have those problems before. It was the white European man who decided that he would enter the foreign territories with his military force and attempt to introduce his rule. And now what? Those people should be left to deal with the consequences of those actions by themselves now, since they are no longer considered a vested interest.

Point 8:

⁶ United Nations, *Cable From Romeo Dallaire To United Nations Headquarters, 11 January 1994*,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

INFORMANT IS PREPARED TO PROVIDE LOCATION OF MAJOR WEAPONS CACHE WITH AT LEAST 135 WEAPONS. HE ALREADY HAS DISTRIBUTED 110 WEAPONS INCLUDING 35 WITH AMMUNITION AND CAN GIVE US DETAILS OF THEIR LOCATION. TYPE OF WEAPONS ARE G3 AND AK47 PROVIDED BY RGF. HE WAS READY TO GO TO THE ARMS CACHE TONIGHT – IF WE GAVE HIM THE FOLLOWING GUARANTEE. HE REQUESTS THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY (HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN) BE PLACED UNDER OUR PROTECTION.⁹

-No comment necessary.

The governments knew exactly what was happening, the reports leave no doubts about that. They simply decided to do nothing.

It is important to once again bring up the number of casualties, which, according to Rwanda, exceeded 1 million people, most of whom were killed using machetes.

What should be mentioned next is the Tutsi war, supported by weapons from the Belgian Congo. Yes, that is correct. A person has to somehow protect their land and the safety of their nation. This then raises a question whether we are dealing with a military conflict or mass genocide.

We can look at the picture painted by history. In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (which was mostly supported by Tutsi) decided that they would like to return to their land and reclaim at least part of the earned privileges and influence granted to them by the Belgians. It is just 4 years before the civil war in Rwanda. The 4th of August 1993 is considered the end of the civil war, which is only a year before the bloodshed described before. Tutsi predominantly wished for a guarantee of safety, as years before they were chased out of Rwanda. The subject from the geopolitical perspective is important, as the civil war between Hutu and Tutsi ended in August of 1993, but the mass genocide began in April of 1994. Therefore, if we take into account that the war and the 'military conflict' were only 9 months apart therefore, from the perspective of highly developed countries, such as the US, it could be said that the conflict was never fully understood and both sides of the conflict should be left alone to discuss this and come to some sort of understanding of their own relations. The only difference is that the said form of discussion was chopping their neighbours up with machetes.

Despite these horrifying events, at the moment Rwanda is considered the safest country in the world.¹⁰ Even a mention of belonging to Hutu or Tutsi results in arrest or a fine. The police are considered supportive, kind and predominantly present on nearly every street. Is it then possible to fix such a ruined social situation? As it happens, it only requires a little bit of effort, both from the United Nations and the society itself, which at no point holds any pride in its terrible history. It is a protestant-catholic country.

To speak of Rwanda, we can not focus only on one of its aspects. History so happens to be quite tricky. People often either regret it or, as a result of many causes, happen to be manipulated by the events.

Rwanda is not only a country of murder and genocide.

The basis of its economy rests with farming, which produces 40.1% of the gross domestic product (2005). Agriculture employs around 90% of the working population. The cropland takes up around 36% of the territory, meadows and pastures around 22%. The main crops grown include: bananas, sweet potatoes, cassava, sorghum, and potatoes. The main export crops are: coffee, tea, tobacco, cotton, and pyrethrum. Livestock farming includes: cattle, goats, sheep, and poultry.¹¹

Industry accounted for 22.9% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2005. The country

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ RDB, *Visit Rwanda*, website, <<https://visitrwanda.com/>> [Accessed: 21st of July 2025].

¹¹ Daniel Clay, René Lemarchand, Others, *Rwanda*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025, <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Rwanda>> [Accessed: 21st July 2025].

extracts cassiterite, coltan, and even gold. Nearly all electricity is generated from hydroelectric power plants. The manufacturing sector (including small food, chemical, textile plants, and a cement factory) is located mainly in Kigali.¹²

The length of the road network is 12 thousands of kilometres (paved roads account for 8%). The roads are in a relatively good technical condition. The cars are the main form of transport in Rwanda. There are no train lines. The only airport is located in Kigali. Inland water transport functions on Lake Kivu, while foreign trade is operated through the port of Mombasa in Kenya.¹³

In 2005, the export amounted to 120 millions of US dollars, and import amounted to 410 millions of the same currency. W 2005 roku wartość eksportu wyniosła 120 mln dol. USA, a importu 410 mln dol. USA. Rwanda mainly exports coffee, tea, cassiterite, and coltan, and imports food, machinery, equipment, petroleum products, and steel. Rwanda mainly trades with Kenya, Germany, and of course – Belgium.¹⁴

Taking into account such terrible events from 20 years ago, Rwanda is hardly recognisable currently. It is also very hard to find precise information about what happened there, as discussing the subject there is severely punished. It may be worth it, though, to focus on the subject from every perspective. How the country looks now, what initially led to the problem, as well as how that problem will forever weigh down on human morality.

Taking into account the data stated before, highlighting how agriculture prospers, the trade is developed, and the justice system is appropriate, it is very hard to imagine that all of those horrible events happened in the 90s. How important is the report from the 11th of January 1994 to realise that this small country on that big continent did not want it at all. How little was needed to prevent the massacre from happening? People would work, farm, get married, procreate. What would happen if 10 Hutu Commandments were immediately banned? Or if the \$8000 per hour to block the radio signal (which was used to distribute the orders and locations of people to be killed) was not considered too expensive for the American Pentagon.¹⁵

12 Daniel Clay, René Lemarchand, Others, *Rwanda*.

13 RDB, *Visit Rwanda*

14 Daniel Clay, René Lemarchand, Others, *Rwanda*.

15 Human Rights Watch, *Confronting Evil: Genocide In Rwanda*, YouTube Recording, 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h3vJJWRcFE>> [Accessed: 21st of July 2025].

Bibliography:

BezPlanu, *Spacer Po Kigali*, YouTube Recording, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_fhwH5uCyM> [Accessed 21st of July 2025].

Clay, Daniel; Lemarchand, René, and Others, *Rwanda*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025, <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Rwanda>> [Accessed: 21st July 2025].

Google Maps, *Rwanda*, map, 2025, <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@-2.5354741,29.0206841,6z?hl=en&entry=ttn&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDcxNi4wIKXMDSOASAFQAw%3D%3D> [Accessed 21st of July 2025].

Gustafsson, Tommy, „Swedish Television News in 1994”, *Historical Media Memories of the Rwandan Genocide: Documentaries, Films, and Television News* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024).

Human Rights Watch, *Confronting Evil: Genocide In Rwanda*, YouTube Recording, 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h3vJJWRcFE>> [Accessed 21st of July 2025]

Human Rights Watch, '42nd Second', *Confronting Evil: Genocide In Rwanda*, YouTube Recording, 2014, <<https://youtu.be/0h3vJJWRcFE?t=42>> [Accessed 21st of July 2025]

Rawson, David, *Prelude to Genocide: Arusha, Rwanda, and the Failure of Diplomacy*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2018) <https://library.oopen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/51076/external_content.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [Accessed 21st of July 2025]

RDB, *Visit Rwanda*, website, <<https://visitrwanda.com/>> [Accessed: 21st of July 2025].

United Nations, *Cable From Romeo Dallaire To United Nations Headquarters, 11 January 1994*, 1994, <<https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=652474>> [Accessed 21st of July 2025].

Williams, Timothy, *The Complexity of Evil: Perpetration and Genocide*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020), <https://library.oopen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/52460/external_content.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [Accessed 21st of July 2025]

Wolfe, Stephanie, and Matthew C. Kane and Tawia B. Ansah, *In the Shadow of Genocide: Justice and Memory within Rwanda*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), <<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/reader/read-online/3762b1a8-a021-4cb2-98bf-b1ab044804e7/book/epub?context=ubx>> [Accessed 21st of July 2025]