

Rwandan military general arrested in London in connection with war crimes

Police take Karenzi Karake, accused of ordering civilian massacres as well as killings of Spanish NGO workers, into custody on behalf of Spanish authorities

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One of Rwanda's top military figures has been arrested in London in relation to alleged war crimes against civilians, police have said.

Karenzi Karake, director general of Rwanda's national intelligence and security services, was prevented from leaving the country on Saturday morning by the Metropolitan police extradition unit on behalf of authorities in Spain.

"Karenzi Karake, 54, a Rwandan national appeared before Westminster magistrates' court on Saturday 20 June after being arrested on a European arrest warrant on behalf of the authorities in Spain, where he is wanted in connection with war crimes against civilians," a Met spokesman said.

Karake was remanded in custody and will reappear in court on Thursday.

A Spanish judge indicted Karake in 2008 for alleged retributory war crimes in the years after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He is accused of ordering massacres while head of Rwanda's military intelligence between 1994 and 1997, and ordering the killing of three Spanish nationals working for the NGO Médicos del Mundo, the BBC reports. He is one of 40 current or former Rwandan military officials named on the indictment.

Karake is a leading member of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the current ruling party of Rwanda, and fought in the civil war that preceded the genocide in which 800,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutus were killed.

He was previously the deputy commander of the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur, Sudan, a role which he left in 2009. Humanitarian campaigners Human Rights Watch had protested against his appointment, accusing him of orchestrating deadly attacks against civilians when Rwandan forces were fighting Uganda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2000.

It is thought Gen Karake had travelled to the UK on business earlier this month, and is said to have visited the country on previous occasions.

Jordi Palou-Loverdos, a lawyer representing nine Spanish massacre victims, told BBC's Newsnight: "We hope in the name of the victims that this time justice will be provided and Karenzi Karake will soon be delivered to the Spanish court to have a fair trial, where

he can defend himself. And we hope that political or other interests will not neutralise the place for justice, truth and reparation.”

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