

## British court grants Rwandan spy chief bail

By Alfons Luna

LONDON: A British court Thursday granted bail to Rwandan intelligence chief Karenzi Karake after President Paul Kagame slammed his arrest as "absolute arrogance."

Karake, who was arrested last week at London Heathrow Airport on a Spanish-issued warrant, appeared at Westminster Magistrates Court in the British capital wearing a yellow and green jumpsuit.

Asked whether he consented to his extradition, Karake, known as "KK", replied: "I do not."

District judge Quentin Purdy said that a full extradition hearing would take place on October 29 and 30.

"I am prepared to grant you conditional bail," he said, setting the bail amount at £1.0 million (\$1.6 million, 1.4 million euros) and ordering Karake to report to the police daily.

The 54-year-old general raised his clasped hands as he entered the dock, to cheers from supporters in the courtroom.

Karake's defense team included Cherie Blair, the wife of Tony Blair. The former British prime minister is an advisor on governance to Kagame.

After the hearing, Karake was driven away in the same police van that he arrived in.

Rwandan Justice Minister Johnston Busingye told reporters outside court: "We will fulfil the conditions of the bail as soon as possible. We cannot wait to see him free."

Once the bail is paid, Karake must live either at the high commissioner's family home or in a house rented by the Rwandan embassy. A precise location was not specified publicly during the hearing.

Afterwards, Rwanda's High Commissioner to Britain, Williams Nkurunziza, told AFP: "I'm very happy but I would have been happier if he would have been allowed to return. This is the best it gets with this legal system."

The general was part of a circle of top military officers in the former Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebel movement.

A Spanish judicial source said he stands accused of "crimes of terrorism" linked to the killing of nine Spanish citizens in Rwanda in the 1990s.

British police, however, said the 54-year-old was arrested for alleged "war crimes against civilians."

A judge at Spain's National Court Wednesday "made a formal request" for Britain to hand over

the suspect, a judicial source said.

A small demonstration took place outside the court in London ahead of the hearing.

"We want them to free KK. His detention is unfair, he actually stopped the genocide," said Mutesi, a 24-year-old Rwandan woman taking part.

"I don't think that he is guilty at all. This is a political case," she said, as demonstrators carried placards reading: "Stop Humiliating Africa" and "UK, USA, Stand Against Spanish Indictments."

The RPF ended the 1994 genocide by Hutu extremists which left an estimated 800,000 people dead, mostly Tutsis. Atrocities were also committed against Hutus.

The Spanish indictment accuses Karake of mass ethnic killings of Hutus in the wake of the 1994 genocide.

The Rwandan government has condemned the detention of Karake, who has been head of the intelligence service since 2011, branding it an "outrage."

Hundreds of protesters marched on the British embassy in the Rwandan capital Kigali Wednesday demanding Karake's release.

"Absolute arrogance and contempt is the only basis for this arrest," Kagame said in a speech to parliament Thursday.

"We cannot accept that people treat us this way just because they can."

Describing Karake as a "freedom fighter" Kagame accused European countries of racism and seeking to humiliate Rwanda - and other Africans - in order to veil their own complicity in the 1994 genocide.

"They want to mask their responsibility by saying it's not us, it is savages of Africa who killed each other," he said.