

## National News

# Rwanda spy boss fights extradition



Cherie Blair arrives at Westminster Magistrates Court in London



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Thursday 25 June 2015

Cherie Blair helped secure bail for Rwanda's intelligence chief today as he fights extradition to Spain in connection with alleged war crimes.

The wife of former Prime Minister Tony Blair appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London where she was working as part of General Karenzi Karake's defence team.

The 54-year-old director-general of Rwanda's national intelligence agency was arrested in the UK on behalf of authorities in Spain, where he is wanted over alleged crimes against civilians.

He is accused of ordering massacres while head of military intelligence in the wake of the 1994 Rwanda genocide, and of ordering the killing of three Spanish nationals working for aid charity Medicos del Mundo.

Wearing a yellow and green jumpsuit, Karake raised his clasped hands above his head as he entered the dock, prompting cheers from the packed public gallery.

He refused to consent to extradition to Spain after the country issued an arrest warrant on

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charges of genocide, conspiracy to commit murder and being part of a terrorist/criminal organisation in Rwanda.

Flanked by two security officers in the dock, Karake spoke to confirm his name and date of birth as District Judge Quentin Purdy granted him conditional bail with a security of £1 million.

He was also ordered not to apply for any travel documents or travel o

Asked by Judge Purdy whether he would comply with the extradition process, Karake's general replied: "I will co-operate."

Prosecutor Aaron Watkins said the arrest warrant related to five alleged offences, offering a maximum prison sentence of 30 years.

"This is a defendant who has no ties in the UK," Mr Watkins said.

"He is a Rwandan national whose presence in the UK was intended to be short term."

Mr Watkins said it was clear the Rwandan government "did not accept the legitimacy of these proceedings".

"It's perfectly plain their feelings towards these proceedings are outrage," he added.

Mark Summers QC, defending Karake, said his client was "a man of impeccable character" with a title in Rwanda comparable to the director of the CIA in America.

"He's not a rogue army officer," he said. "He's a senior member of a respected and democratic government.

"The context of these allegations is the government's battle to end the 1994 genocide.

"This is a private prosecution in Spain by private interest groups with links to those responsible for the underlying genocide."

Mr Summers said Rwanda was not alone in its outrage about the indictment as the US had labelled it a "bloated political tract".

Karake's supporters began singing in the public gallery as he left the dock, while Rwanda's High Commissioner, Attorney General and the country's ambassador to Spain also sat in the well of the court.

Mrs Blair confirmed later that Karake would not be released from custody today.

Speaking outside the courtroom, Johnstone Busingye, Rwanda's minister for justice and attorney general, said: "We did not expect General Karake would be arrested in the UK. When it happened we trusted we would make our case when the day comes in the court of law."

Asked whether the arrest would affect Rwanda's relationship with the UK, he replied: "Our relationship with the UK is bigger and longer and I would not want to narrow it."

Karake's arrest on Saturday was condemned by Rwanda's High Commissioner in London, Williams Nkurunziza, as "an insult", and former international development secretary Andrew Mitchell claimed it was "politically motivated".

Mr Mitchell, who worked closely with the Rwandan government while a Cabinet minister, said the European arrest warrant system was being "abused", with the allegations pursued by supporters of the old regime in Rwanda.

More than a dozen protesters waving placards in support of General Karake - who is nicknamed KK - gathered outside the court ahead of the hearing.

The placards included the messages "Stop humiliating Africa," "#freekarake" and "UK, USA stand up against the Spanish indictment".

Another placard read: "Rwandan Community in the UK stand by our hero Lt Gen Karenzi Karake".

One protester, who gave his name only as Peter, said: "The

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embassy has its own official duties but we as Rwandans and compatriots of General KK are here to support him."



A case management hearing will take place at the court on September 26 before a full extradition hearing on October 29 and 30.

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