

# Rwandan intelligence chief refuses extradition from UK to Spain

General Karenzi Karake, accused of terrorism and ordering massacres in Rwanda, vows to fight extradition after being granted conditional bail by British court

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The British courts will hear a controversial legal battle after Rwanda's intelligence chief said he would fight an extradition request from Spain over allegations of genocide and terrorism, charges the country's government insists are politically motivated and insulting.

Emmanuel Karenzi Karake, whose legal campaign is being led by Cherie Booth QC, was arrested at Heathrow airport on Saturday under a European arrest warrant following his six-day trip to London.

He was granted conditional bail on Thursday, pending a full extradition hearing. The bail conditions include a £1m surety given by Rwandan diplomats.

He is a senior member of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the movement which halted the country's 1994 genocide by extremists from the Hutu majority that led to the deaths of an estimated 800,000 Rwandans, mainly Tutsis. The RPF is led by Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame.

Karake is among 40 people sought on the orders of a Spanish judge over the alleged murder of three Spanish aid workers in Rwanda and revenge massacres of Hutus in the wake of the genocide.

Speaking on Thursday, Kagame said in a speech: "Any decent Rwandan, any decent African, and even any decent person from these countries cannot accept this. Absolutely not."

Karake appeared before Westminster magistrates, dressed in a green and yellow patterned jumpsuit, seemingly a prison issue garment. Dozens of Rwandan nationals, who had protested outside the court before packing into the public gallery, cheered as he greeted them with a raised hand salute.

Aaron Watkins, representing the Spanish government, said Karake's bail should be refused ahead of a full extradition hearing at the end of October, since there was a serious risk of his fleeing.

"We submit that in this unusual case there are strong grounds that if granted bail the defendant would refuse to surrender," Watkins argued. While Karake's lawyers said he

was in the UK on official government business, the UK Border Agency had said this was not the case, Watkins added.

But Mark Summers QC, representing Karake and verbally advised throughout the hearing by Booth, said his client, whom he referred to throughout as “the general”, was “a man of impeccable character” who should never have been arrested.

“He is not a rogue officer,” Summers said. “He is a senior member of a respected and democratic government.” Summers described the Spanish warrant as deeply flawed, politically motivated and “driven by parties with links to the underlying genocide” in Rwanda.

Interpol had sufficient doubts about the warrant to refuse to circulate it, Summers said, adding: “It seeks to criminalise the whole of the current Rwandan government.” Summers said Karake would argue for diplomatic immunity, saying his visa to the UK was granted following a request to UK diplomats for him to travel on “an official mission”.

Rwanda’s high commissioner to the UK, Williams Nkurunziza, attended the hearing, as did the country’s ambassador to Spain. The court heard Nkurunziza had written to personally guarantee Karake would not flee.

Summers insisted bail could be granted safely, saying that if Karake were to flee it would bring “shame and disrespect” on the Rwandan government.

The district judge, Quentin Purdy, granted Karake bail on condition he lived at a high commission property, staying there from between the hours of 8pm and 8am, reported daily to Barnet police station in London and did not go beyond the M25. He was to remain in custody until the Rwandan officials provided the £1m in surety. Booth said this was not expected to happen this Thursday.

A full extradition hearing would be held on 29 and 30 October. As Karake was led away from the dock his supporters left the courtroom singing and cheering. The British high commission in Rwanda’s capital Kigali has been the focus for protests over the past two days and his arrest has been criticised by Andrew Mitchell, formerly the international development secretary.

However, Karake has faced accusations of links to atrocities. When he was made deputy chief of the UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Sudan’s Darfur region, the organisation Human Rights Watch criticised the appointment.

Anneke Van Woudenberg from Human Rights Watch, who attended the hearing, said the allegations deserved to be heard in court: “The Spanish arrest warrant, in our opinion, has some merit. It certainly has some political overtones and some bits of it one can question, but there’s a core that tallies very much with Human Rights Watch’s evidence.”

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