


18.07.08 - BELGIUM/RWANDA - 'BRUSSELS CAN EFFECT ARREST WARRANTS AGAINST RPF SUSPECTS'

Brussels, 18 July 2008 (FH) - Philippe Meire, Belgian Federal Prosecutor, remains determined to execute on Belgian soil, if necessary, the Spanish arrest warrants that target members of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) currently in power in Kigali. 

"Let's be clear, these arrest warrants will be executed except for people who benefit from a jurisdictional immunity", he told Hirondele Agency, by referring to the cancellation by Rwanda, in May, of the visit of the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs after the Belgian authorities had noted presence in the delegation of Joseph Nzabamwita, number two of exterior security and wanted by Spanish judiciary.

Nzabamwita is part of the 40 Rwandans targeted by arrest warrants issued on 6 February by Judge Fernando Abreu Merelles. Spanish justice accuses these top-ranking officials of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) regime of genocide, crimes against humanity and terrorism.

"Rwanda was shocked when we warned them that the Spanish arrest warrants would be executed against a Rwandan accompanying the delegation. But we are legally held with respect to the Spaniards to execute these warrants", he clarified.

Similarly, if an admissible complaint is filed against the RPF before Belgian courts, "it will be the subject of an investigation", he assured, responding to the recurring criticisms of judicial bias, before which are on trial representatives of Hutu extremism or the authors of the genocide policy, whereas the RPF with its Tutsi majority, which seized power in 1994 by stopping the slaughters, was also suspected of grave crimes.

He pointed out that a complaint had been filed by the former Major Bernard Ntuyahaga [sentenced in 2007 by a Belgian court to 20 years in prison for his role in the genocide] against President Paul Kagame, and other people. "The duty to investigate was carried out, we wanted to do others, in particular in Tanzania, which blocked these steps. Then this case was dropped by the Final Court of Appeal in 2003", reminded the prosecutor.

"Two other complaints concerning acts committed by 'the other camp' were shelved without a follow up, because the criteria of jurisdiction was not met", he pointed out, adding: "But, at the present time, I do not know of people who belonged to the RPF who took part in war crimes or crimes against humanity and who would be present on Belgian soil."

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