

Rwandan Genocide Tribunal Requests Venue Transfers to Meet Deadline

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The president of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is briefing the U.N. Security Council on the court's efforts to prosecute the 90 people indicted for masterminding the Rwandan genocide. Katy Migiro reports for VOA that the court hopes to transfer a number of cases to Rwandan and European courts in an effort to complete its work before its mandate expires next year.

Significant changes are taking place in the way in which the 10-year-old International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda prosecutes those it believes are responsible for the 1994 genocide.

The court has until the end of 2008 to complete the trials of the 90 people it has indicted as the main instigators of the Rwandan genocide. Eighteen of these men are still on the run. The majority of the 72 who have been arrested are either in court or still awaiting the start of their trials.

Last week, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, based in Arusha, Tanzania, made his first request for a case to be transferred to Rwanda for trial.

If the request is approved, the prosecutor hopes to transfer up to 16 more cases to Rwanda.

The prosecutor also hopes to transfer several cases to Europe.

On Friday, the prosecutor revealed the names of two fugitives that he wants to be tried in Europe - Wencelas Munyeshaka and Laurent Bucyibaruta.



Tim Gallimore addresses a press briefing in Nairobi, Kenya, 18 June 2007

AFP Photo

The spokesman for the prosecutor, Tim Gallimore, says their names were revealed - or unsealed - because the court believes they are close to being caught.

"Those two indictments are unsealed and these two persons are targeted for transfer to a European country," he said. "Of the 18 fugitives, we have already two now that have been identified for transfer to a European jurisdiction."

Gallimore says the European country may be revealed later this week.

One of the major challenges facing the tribunal is what to do with indictees who are acquitted or have served their term. When it was set up, U.N. member states agreed to share the burden of hosting such people. But several men have been stuck in Tanzania for up to four years, at the tribunal's expense, waiting for another country to take them on.

Tribunal spokesperson Roland Amoussouga says the prosecutor will ask members of the U.N. Security Council to fulfill their obligations when he meets with them Monday in New York.

"Those are people who do not have any passports," he said. "They do not have ID. And some of them have families in the western countries and they all believe that they would be better off security wise in Europe or elsewhere, not in any African countries. Some of them have their wives who are citizens of a particular country, for instance in Belgium. Their kids are there."

The International Criminal Tribunal has completed 33 cases since it began its work in 1997, with 28 convictions and five acquittals. It has cost \$1 billion.

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