

Official Transcript: Roland Amoussouga (Part 11 of 13)



Role:	Spokesperson for the Tribunal
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Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Batya Friedman Donald J Horowitz Ronald Slye Robert Utter
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Roland Amoussouga discusses his extensive history working for the UN and with the Rwanda Tribunal. As Chief of External Relations he describes the function and operation of the strategic planning section of the Tribunal and reflects on the difficulty of working in Kigali immediately following the genocide. He highlights the need to train and prepare staff members sent to work in post-conflict situations, and emphasizes the need to create training manuals for humanitarian workers placed in conflict situations in the future.

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Part 11

- 00:01** **Robert Utter: Three very short questions. First of all, I would like to know what the condition of the Rwandan judiciary was after the genocide in '94 and what has improved since then.**
- 00:18 The condition was disastrous. Everything was almost wiped out and Rwanda has to build from scratch. In terms of human resources, about 90 percent were killed or were away, run away or were involved or running for their lives. The offices, most of them were destroyed. The files were destroyed and Rwanda was really a state without a judiciary.
- 01:02 But it shows how much they were committed to come out of the ashes. They have done a tremendous job. They were willing to receive assistance from NGOs, from governments, everybody focused on setting up a program for the rehabilitation of the judiciary. The UN member state, like your country the USA, the UK, the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, European Union, various NGOs, helping out to train, to identify, to train and to help.
- 01:48 The Former Minister of Justice, the first Minister of Justice – he died now, Mr. Alphonse Nkubito – was a personal friend. He did not even have a car at that time; everything was destroyed. Sometimes I used to go and give him a ride from his home – a government home where you have no chairs, nothing – to his office.
- 02:12 And the office, nothing; destroyed, the door broken, everything. The Minis-, the Minister of Internal Affairs who was also, who also died now, Seth Sendashonga was a personal friend, I was helping a lot. Sometimes I was even buying from my own pocket, some reams of papers that I gave to them. It's just to highlight to you how down the system was.
- 02:46 But today Rwanda has been at the forefront of renovation, of reform, of reconstruction. And they've reached a level now where they are, they can be trusted and the judiciary is on the safest path. I believe it will just be a matter of few more years for Rwanda to become one of the top well-equipped – w-, which has one of the well-equipped, in terms of human resources, in terms of material judiciary.
- 03:37 They are young because the population is very young now. They don't have the luxury of extensive experience. Some of them who come from abroad are now in a process of sharing experience with the youth. The current president of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights is a Rwandese. He was the first president of the newly reconstituted Supreme Court.
- 04:13 He's now here in Arusha. He's been elected last, this year as the new president but they are moving very fast. And it's tremendous; the reconstruction and rehabilitation of all sectors of Rwanda is tremendous. Even myself when I go back to Rwanda I don't find my way easily any more. The country has changed completely.

- 04:38 Good governance became the rule of the day, not only the judiciary, but in all sectors. They have made headway unbelievably, including in sport. They qualify for the African Cup. Now they're running, they're in a competition for the World Cup. They are doing tremendously. The only downside is that for sake of for stability, the democratic space is not yet wide; it's still very narrow.
- 05:15 **RU: Where are the judges selected from?**
- 05:18 I cannot give you specifics in terms of that and that the best way for you is to get more direct information from Rwanda. I would not like to pass any judgments about it. I know that they're Rwandese, some of them are lawyers, some of them have gone through the process of selection.
- 05:43 As you know, Rwanda has two type of judiciary: the quasi-judiciary which is the Gacaca; the community based justice system, and the normal judiciary system that has to follow the, the norms of any judiciary where you have university training people and then they go to the judiciary training center. They graduate, they get recruited and they get trained and deployed, et cetera, et cetera. They are from Rwanda.
- 06:13 Others who come from abroad by virtue of their education and they get there also can come. And Rwanda has opened wide its doors for its kids. There is no more exclusion. They won't tell you because you are Hutu or Tutsi you are no longer authorized to come. You can come. So it's a very inclusive and they have now institutions; higher learning institutions that prepare them, equip them.
- 06:42 And at that level we are also ICTR intervening to help shape the mind of these new or youth who are the leader of tomorrow. So we, they are also the Gacaca system of recruitment of judges, which is based on other criteria that they have adopted. So that's what I can tell you with respect to that. They are all Rwandese; sometimes they may have Rwandese who happen to be living in the DRC or in the diaspora, including Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, USA, UK, Germany.
- 07:28 They all come back. And you know they have one language that unifies them; Kinyarwanda. All of them speak Kinyarwanda. And now Kinyarwanda is the official language. French and English are secondary languages; they are no longer first languages. So they all understand Kinyarwanda.
- 07:47 That's why it's so artificial the division that they brought in by saying that there are three different ethnic groups in Rwanda. It does not make any sense at all because if you go through the definition of ethnic-, -city, of ethnic groups, the definition cannot be applicable to the case of Rwandan people; among the three groups that they classify as ethnics like Batwa, Batutsi and Ba-, and, and Bahutu.
- 08:16 It's not possible. They have the same language, they have the same culture, they, they have the same religious belief. It's just societal classification that turned into ethnicity based on the colonial heritage.