

FAX (301) 92374-9256

1994 Rwanda Killings 'Not Genocide,' Claims US Study

BY MATTHEW GREEN
LITERS

UNITED STATES
Researchers are challenging the conventional view that the 1994 massacre of some 500,000 Rwandans was a genocide, drawing an angry response from the Rwanda government which has accused them of insulting survivors.

An aide to Rwandan President Paul Kagame said the research was a "malicious" attempt to distort the truth just days ahead of memorials on Wednesday to mark the 10th anniversary of the start of the killings.

The research also questioned the commonly held view that the majority of victims were from Rwanda's ethnic Tutsi minority, rather than the Hutu majority, in another challenge to a government dominated by Tutsis.

"People simply have the basic facts wrong, and worse, many don't even appear interested in assembling the necessary information," said Christian Davenport, a political science professor from the University of Maryland, who car-

ried out the study.

"We consider this more of a totalitarian purge, a politicide, rather than ethnic cleansing or genocide," Mr Davenport said in a statement.

According to the conventional view, extremists from the Hutu majority organised a genocide in an attempt to exterminate Tutsis, who they perceived as challenging their long-standing domination of the government.

Bands of militia coupled with soldiers and paramilitaries hunted down and killed Tutsis and Hutu moderates in 100 days of slaughter that began on April 6, 1994, when a plane carrying the Rwandan president was shot down.

The genocide is widely considered to have ended when Tutsi rebels led by Kagame ousted the government and seized control of the capital, Kigali, in July 1994.

Davenport agrees that the killings began with an organised cadre of Hutu militiamen, but argues that they quickly cascaded into an ever-widening circle of violence, with both Hutus and Tutsis playing the role of victims and aggressors.

"Our research strongly suggests that a majority of the victims were Hutus — there weren't enough Tutsis in Rwanda at the time to account for all the reported deaths," said Davenport, who worked with an associate, Allan Stam, from Dartmouth College.

"Either the scale of the killing was much smaller than is widely believed, or more likely, a huge number of Hutus were caught up in the violence as inadvertent victims. The evidence suggests the killers didn't try to figure out who everybody was. They erred on the side of comprehensiveness," Davenport said.

Many researchers and the government maintain that most of the victims were Tutsis, while Kagame, himself a Tutsi, has based much of his legitimacy on his role in leading the Rwandan Patriotic Front rebels who ended the genocide.

"It's an insult to survivors and to Rwandans in general," said Alfred Ndahiro, an adviser to Kagame. "I think we should treat it with contempt. It's incredible that such things can come up at this time," he told journalists last Saturday.

*from The East African 1 p. 6
April 5 - 11/2004*

FROM : MPOUSHLA HOUSE

PHONE NO. : 254020891971

Apr. 13 2004 05:30PM P01