

Rwanda's Media - Cautious of Content

In my article, [Rwanda's Media - Haunted By Its Past](#) published on Monday, 12 November 2012, I elaborated the history of the Rwandan media and how it was a victim of its very long history of being sectarian, partisan and mismanaged.

The media in Rwanda played a pivotal role in the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. For genocide to take place, a section of the population has to be publicly targeted and the rest of the population prepared to annihilate that targeted group.

In Rwanda, the Hutu population was mobilised and organised to decimate the entire Tutsi population. The former were even provided with the means to kill.

Habyarimana, Kabuga and the Genocidal leadership imported machetes and provided training for the 'task'. The only way to disseminate information regarding the strategy to wipe out the Tutsi was through the media.

That is how Ferdinand Ndahimana, the director general of ORINFOR (Radio Rwanda, Rwanda Television, Imvaho and La Releve) then, Hassan Ngeze and his notorious *Kangura* newspaper, Kantano, Noheli, Bemeriki and Georges Rugio all of Radio Television de Mille Collines (RTL), Simon Bikindi and Leon Mugesera come in.

That was their role.

Their orders were: spread the Genocide "gospel" and make every Hutu feel that it their responsibility to kill every Tutsi and at the same time prepare every Tutsi to receive death as a "justifiable inevitability".

The media reminded - over and over again - the Hutu population that they were the majority and therefore carrying out the Genocide would be easy and speedy.

The so called journalists would broadcast and print updates of the killings as well as provide locations and neighbourhoods of the Tutsis.

They built confidence in the Hutu by inferring that since the guilt would be ethnically collective, there would be no accountability because all the Tutsi would be wiped out. That explains why it took 90 days only to exterminate over a million people using rudimentary weapons.

Soon after the RPF launched the Liberation war, in December 1990, Ngeze published the *Hutu Ten Commandments*.

The Commandments were clearly following the above mentioned orders. All Hutus should preach the "Hutu Ideology" of

1959 - all Tutsis were the common enemy to be decimated. Failure to spread this ideology was tantamount to treachery.

The Commandments ordered Hutu men not to marry or have any relationship with Tutsi women. Hutu women were asked to jealously guard their men against these agents. Any Hutu man who went against this commandment would be considered a traitor to the Hutu cause. All Tutsis were to be excluded from all Political, Military, security, economic, administrative positions.

Leon Mugesera did the same in November 1992; he requested and it was published and broadcast through the media that all Tutsi "scum" be wiped off the face of Rwanda and their bodies be sent back home to Ethiopia through river Nyabarongo.

Such is what was contained in the Rwandan media.

What can Rwanda's media today learn from the tragic experience?

The actors in the media are they politicians, administrators, journalists or artists. They should learn to act with a great sense of responsibility when publishing an article, giving interviews, Tweeting, Facebooking, singing and everything else they do when disseminating for public consumption.

This is because one disseminates to public solely for the purpose of influencing the thoughts and actions of others and disseminating inadequately researched or irresponsible information can negatively affect other people's lives - adversely if one is to go by Rwanda's experience.

This does not mean that one is not entitled to their opinion, but when published it should not aggress or infringe on other people's rights. If you must publish, broadcast, Tweet or Facebook as is the trend with the increasing use of new technologies, one must think about the repercussions.

The other thing the actors in the media world should note is that whatever is published or broadcast, whatever the platform cannot be erased forever.

It eventually catches up with you and those aggrieved then hold you accountable. You can run but you cannot hide. That is why Ngeze is languishing in an ICTR prison in Arusha years after he published his *Hutu Ten Commandments*. So is Ndahimana Ferdinand for his Genocidal administration of National media. The same goes for Simon Bikindi for his infamous songs composed to mobilize Hutus into killing Tutsis. Twenty years later, Leon Mugesera's hate speech brought him all the way from Canada to Rwandan to face trial.

This is universal in the media world; more recently, remember the BBC director general, the BBC news director and her deputy? They lost their jobs or have been suspended, pending investigations for their actions or inactions.

They were held accountable because of the amount of power the media has and one does not simply get away with infringement of people's rights.

Reporting with caution, carrying out research and adhering to the principles of good journalism is all it takes to get the best out of the media and enjoy the merits that come along with it.

Source: [allAfrica](#)