

## Twenty years after violence tore it apart, Rwanda prospers

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Rwandan children listen and pray during a Sunday morning service at the Sainte-Famille Catholic Church, the scene of many killings during the 1994 genocide, in the capital Kigali, Rwanda, on April 6, 2014. Photo: AP Photo/Ben Curtis

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — It's been 20 years since Rwanda's mass killings wiped out nearly one million people. Now, in scattered villages on steep green hillsides, many who killed their neighbors live side by side with relatives of the dead.

Hutus and Tutsis are the biggest ethnic groups in the country. In 1994, Hutus killed more than 800,000 Tutsis — and even some Hutus — in one of the worst crimes of the 20th century.

Rwanda has made stunning progress since then.

Speech that stirs ethnic conflict has been banned. Local courts have allowed many killers to be released from prison. In return, they confess and express regret. And a generation of young people who grew up after the mass killings identify not as Hutus or Tutsis, but as Rwandans.

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## An Expanding Economy

Life expectancy has doubled since 1994 to more than 60 years and the number of deaths of children under 5 has dropped. Twenty years ago 230 out of every 1,000 kids didn't live to see their 5th birthday. Now, that number has dropped to 55 out of every 1,000.

The economy has expanded as businesses have grown and jobs are more available.

Lately, however, human rights groups have criticized Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame. He is seen as using his power for the wrong ends.

Kagame says that improved education and an end to poverty are the most effective ways to prevent a return of violence. The government spends a quarter of its yearly money on health and 17 percent on education, according to the World Bank.

The positive news out of Rwanda stands in sharp contrast to the recent results of attempts to stop targeted killing of entire groups of people, known as genocide. The international community vowed that "never again" would the world stand by as mass killings occur like the one in Rwanda.

In 2002, the International Criminal Court was set up to try individuals for, among other charges, genocide and crimes against humanity. And in 2005, a summit of world leaders adopted the principle of the "responsibility to protect." This obliged the international community to move in when civilians are under attack and their governments fail to protect them.

## Killings Continue In Africa

But the United Nations still fails to protect populations when wars break out.

In the Central African Republic, killings of Muslims by Christians have been taking place for months. A proposed U.N. force to halt the slaughter has yet to be sent. In the meantime, most of the Muslim population has fled the country.

U.N. troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been criticized for not preventing attacks on ordinary people by armed groups. However, last November U.N. troops helped Congolese army forces defeat M23, a rebel group.

In South Sudan, U.N. troops failed to prevent an estimated 10,000 ethnic killings in December. However, the death toll might have been even higher without the U.N. presence.

The Rwandan genocide was triggered on April 7, 1994. A plane carrying Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, both Hutus, was shot down. The source of the attack is disputed.

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Kagame had led a rebel group attempting to oust the Habyarimana government since 1990. But after nearly three years of civil war, a peace deal was signed and elections were supposed to follow.

The downing of the plane sunk the peace deal. It set off the mass killing of Tutsis by Hutu extremists. They were spurred on by radio hosts, who used their programs to call Tutsis "cockroaches" that should be killed.

Neighbors killed neighbors and entire families were wiped out.

### Self-Sufficient in Farming

The U.N. did nothing to halt the bloody rampage, claiming that it didn't have the authority to act. European countries did not step in. Bill Clinton, then the U.S. president, has since apologized. Last year, he admitted that as many as 300,000 lives could have been saved had America acted.

After three months of fighting, Kagame's forces reached the capital, Kigali, and drove the Rwandan army from power.

Today, even though it is the most densely populated country in Africa, the nation of 11 million is self-sufficient in farming, according to the World Food Program. Children have more food to eat, and are less malnourished than they once were. It is rated as the easiest place to do business in Africa.

One Saturday a month, all citizens are required to participate in cleaning up Rwanda. The country is neat and orderly.

"We must work hard because if we wait for others to develop our country, we will not make progress," Kagame said last month. Help from other countries "must only come as an addition to our own efforts to better ourselves."

### Quiz

- Which best explains the progress made by Rwanda over the past 20 years?
  - Rwanda has made progress in business, food and life expectancy but genocide could return.
  - Rwanda has made progress in business, food and life expectancy but the government has been criticized.
  - Rwanda has made progress in business, food and life expectancy but it doesn't get along with the United Nations.
  - Rwanda has made progress in business, food and life expectancy but Hutus and Tutsis are forced to live together.
- How does the author show that the United Nations has failed to stop genocide since Rwanda?
  - by noting that Bill Clinton apologized for not helping Rwanda
  - by mentioning that the International Criminal Court couldn't stop killings
  - by mentioning that the downing of the plane led to killings of Tutsis by Hutus
  - by giving examples of three other African countries where it couldn't stop killings
- Which of the following events DID NOT set off the genocide in Rwanda?
  - broadcasts by radio hosts
  - three years of civil war in Rwanda
  - the downing of the Rwandan president's plane
  - neighbors killed neighbors and families were being wiped out
- Choose the paragraph from the article that best describes how Rwanda's government has tried to create peace between Hutus and Tutsis.