

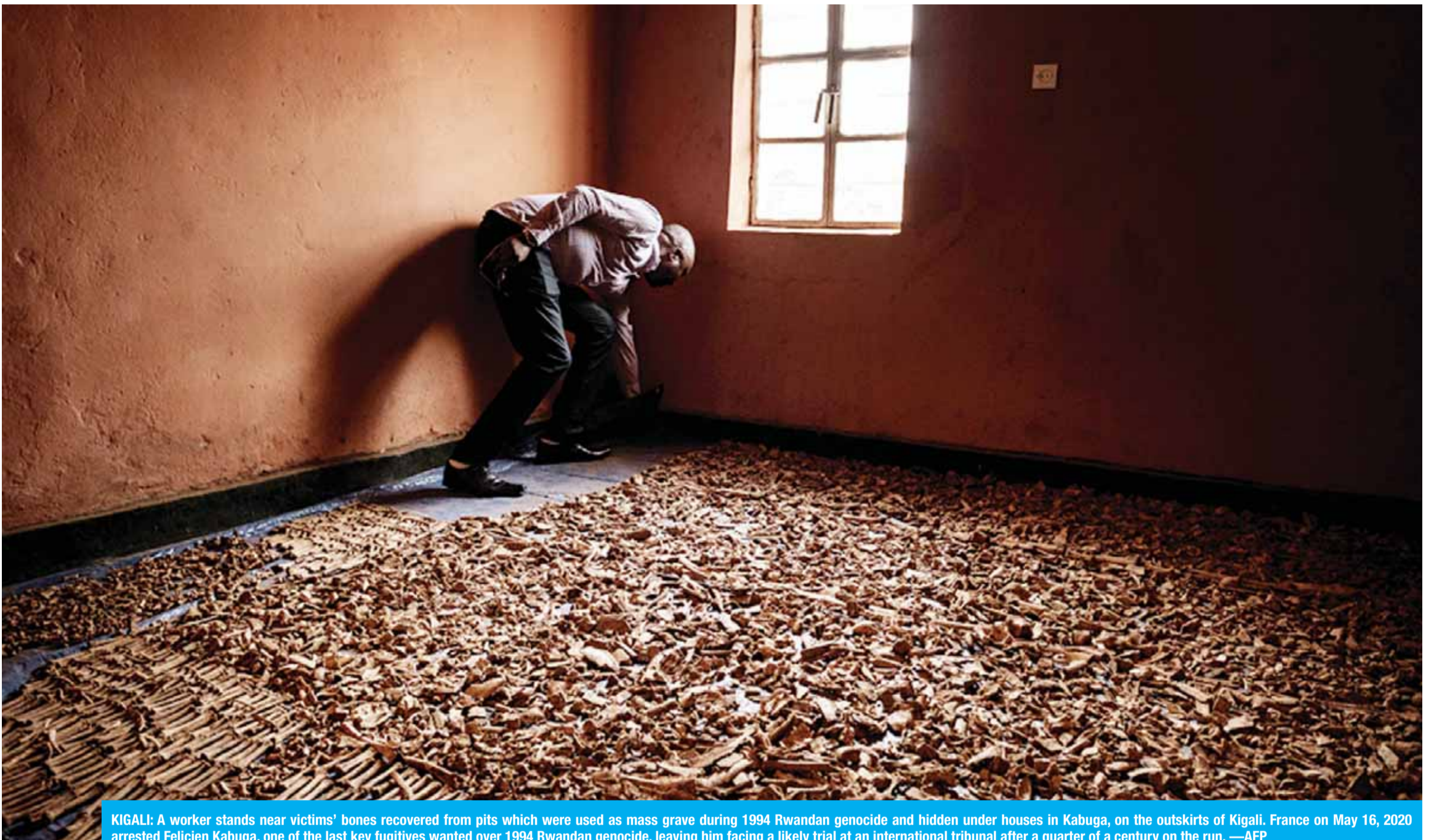


Brazil's coronavirus death toll tops 15,000

Tensions rise as Germans clamor to return to Mallorcan homes

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KIGALI: A worker stands near victims' bones recovered from pits which were used as mass grave during 1994 Rwandan genocide and hidden under houses in Kabuga, on the outskirts of Kigali. France on May 16, 2020 arrested Felicien Kabuga, one of the last key fugitives wanted over 1994 Rwandan genocide, leaving him facing a likely trial at an international tribunal after a quarter of a century on the run. —AFP

'Financier' of Rwanda genocide nabbed

One of the last key fugitives in French custody

PARIS: Felicien Kabuga, one of the last key fugitives wanted over the 1994 Rwandan genocide, was in French custody Saturday after a quarter of a century on the run, and now faces likely trial at an international tribunal. French police arrested Kabuga, once one of Rwanda's richest men, in a dawn raid in the Paris suburbs, where he had been living under a false identity, the prosecutor's office and police said in a joint statement. Officers found an 84-year-old man "who has been sought by the judicial authorities for 25 years", the statement said.

Around 800,000 people - Tutsis but also moderate Hutus - were slaughtered over 100 days by ethnic Hutu extremists during the 1994 genocide. Kabuga was arrested at his home in Asnieres-sur-Seine north of Paris, where he had been hiding with the help of his children. The police statement described him as "one of the world's most wanted fugitives". The news was hailed in Rwanda. "Capturing Felicien Kabuga is very welcome and a commendable act that serves justice... our wish as the umbrella body for genocide survivors is for him to be deported and tried in Rwanda where he committed the crimes," Jean Pierre Dusangizemungu, head of the Ibuku association, told AFP.



Kabuga arrested in a dawn raid in the Paris suburbs

'Behind Interahamwe'
Kabuga is accused of creating the notorious Interahamwe militia that carried out massacres during the genocide. He also helped create Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines which, in its broadcasts, incited people to carry out murder. During his years on the run, Kabuga spent time in Germany, Belgium, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Switzerland. Eric Emeraux, the head of the OCLCH, France's agency for fighting crimes against humanity, told AFP renewed efforts were made to track down Kabuga two months

ago after new intelligence emerged. Olivier Olsen, head of the association of homeowners in the building where he lived, described Kabuga as "someone very discreet... who murmured when you said hello". He said Kabuga had lived there for three or four years. Kabuga is accused of using his wealth and influence during the genocide to funnel money to militia groups as chairman of the Fonds de Defense Nationale (FDN) fund. According to the US State Department, which has offered a \$5 million reward for information about him, Kabuga through the FDN "is alleged to have provided funds to the interim Rwandan government for the purposes of executing the 1994 genocide".

'Brought to account'
Kabuga was indicted by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1997 on seven counts, including genocide. Among other things, it accused him of having arranged the shipments of "an impressive number of machetes and other weapons to the Interahamwe militia, which were used in the massacres. The tribunal formally closed in 2015.

Its duties have since been taken over by the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT), which also deals with cases left over from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. "The arrest of Felicien Kabuga today is a reminder that those responsible for genocide can be brought to account, even 26 years after their crimes," said Serge Brammertz, chief prosecutor of the MICT in The Hague. He was ordered to be remanded in custody until the judicial authorities can rule on whether or not he should be sent to The Hague to face justice. Kabuga is expected to be tried at the mechanism's branch in Arusha in Tanzania, an official from the prosecutor's office said.

clashed with anti-lockdown protesters. The growing demonstrations have sparked comparison to the anti-Muslim Pegida marches at the height of Europe's refugee crisis in 2015, raising questions over whether the strong support that Merkel is currently enjoying due to her handling of the virus crisis could evaporate.

Just as it won popularity by fanning anti-migrant sentiment five years ago, the far-right AfD party is now openly encouraging protesters and repositioning itself as an anti-lockdown party. A recent poll commissioned by the Spiegel news magazine found that almost one in four Germans surveyed voiced "understanding" for the demonstrations. The development has shocked the political establishment, with Merkel reportedly telling the top brass of her centre-right CDU party of the "worrying" trend that may bear some hallmarks of Russia's disinformation campaigns.

'Vilification'
Germany in March took unprecedented measures to shut down public life. While a huge majority of Germans back the action, giving Merkel's government a big boost in approval ratings, dissent is fomenting, particularly online where YouTube videos championing conspiracy theories or quack medical advice are attracting tens of



Photo shows Felicien Kabuga, one of the last key fugitives wanted over the 1994 Rwandan genocide, who was arrested in a Paris suburb on May 16, 2020. —AFP

Two more still at large
The son of peasants, Kabuga grew his business from selling cigarettes and second-hand clothes at markets in his northern home region of Byumba. He expanded by opening businesses in the capital Kigali and by 1993 was already part of the inner circle of then Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, his daughter marrying one of the president's sons. It was the assassination of Habyarimana on April 6, 1994 that unleashed the genocide. Along with former defense minister Augustin Bizimana and top-ranking military figure Protais Mpiranya - both still at large - Kabuga was one of the three most significant suspects still sought over the genocide.

France has long been known as a hiding place for wanted genocide suspects and French investigators currently have dozens of cases underway. The genocide has cast a long shadow over Franco-Rwandan relations. Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, a Tutsi, accuses France of having supported the ethnic Hutu forces behind most of the slaughter and of having helped some of the perpetrators to escape. Last year, President Emmanuel Macron announced the creation of a commission of experts to delve into the French state archives in a bid to set the historical record straight. —AFP



MUNICH: Police officers with horses stand near an unauthorized protest near the official demonstration against the restrictions implemented to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus Covid-19 in Munich. —AFP

thousands of views. Seeking to counter absurd claims, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that although he wasn't a medical practitioner, he could safely suggest that the "uncomfortable and cumbersome face mask is more to be recommended than a tin-foil hat". —AFP

Homophobic crimes on the rise in France

PARIS: Homophobic attacks and insults in France rose by 36 percent last year, according to figures released by the Interior Ministry on Saturday, prompting the government to talk of an "anchoring" of homophobia in the country. The leap comes after 2018 was described as a "black" year by associations with an unequalled level of physical violence against LGBT people.

The new figures, which show a steady increase in offences, come on the eve of the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, and 30 years after the withdrawal of homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses by the World Health Organization (WHO). Last year, the police "identified 1,870 victims of homophobic or transphobic offences compared to 1,380 in 2018", representing a "36 percent increase in the number of victims of anti-LGBT acts", the ministry said in a statement.

"These figures testify to the deep anchoring of homophobia and transphobia in society," said the ministry, adding that they form part of a broader increase in "hate acts and identity extremism". Insults constitute 33 percent of the offences, while violence (physical and sexual) make up 28 percent of the complaints. The victims are mainly men - 75 percent - with 62 percent perpetrated against those under 35 years of age. LGBT associations claim that the figures do not tell the whole story as many victims do not report crimes to the police. The SOS Homophobia association is due to publish its own figures on Monday.

The report shows that the incidents of homophobia are spread across the country with 36 percent of the complaints coming in the big cities. "This shows us that there is homophobia throughout the territory, including in rural areas," Frederic Potier, the interministerial delegate for the fight against racism, anti-Semitism and anti-LGBT hatred (Dilerah) told AFP. The world of sport comes under the microscope after several top football matches were interrupted because of homophobic chants from the stands or the display of abusive banners.

The Interior Ministry, which called on Saturday for "increased vigilance by the public authorities" and more effort from society as a whole, recorded around 30 complaints concerning insults or threats made on the internet. French lawmakers on Wednesday approved a controversial bill to ban hate speech on social media, a measure dismissed as censorship by detractors. The law obliges platforms and search engines to remove offensive content - incitement to hate or violence and racist or religious bigotry - within 24 hours or risk a fine of up to 1.25 million euros (\$1.35 million). —AFP

Alarm in Germany as 'corona demos' take off

MUNICH: Angered by a slew of lockdown measures, purported vaccine plans or alleged state surveillance, thousands took to the streets on Saturday in Germany in a growing wave of demonstrations that has alarmed even Chancellor Angela Merkel. Initially starting as a handful of protesters decrying tough restrictions on public life to halt transmission of the coronavirus, the demonstrations have swelled in recent weeks to gatherings of thousands in major German cities. Huge numbers of anti-lockdown protesters, conspiracy theorists, anti-vaxxers or extremists massed across Germany again on Saturday, with more than 5,000 gathering in Stuttgart, at least 1,500 in Frankfurt and around 1,000 in Munich.

"Corona is fake", claimed one poster held aloft in Stuttgart, "Isolation, Masks, Tracking, Vaccine - that's a no go", cried another. Police in Berlin made 200 arrests as scuffles broke out, while in Hamburg, conspiracy theorists