

International

Hague trial set for 1994 Rwanda genocide accused Felicien Kabuga

Kabuga pushed into the courtroom in a wheelchair

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: Felicien Kabuga, an alleged financier of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, will go on trial in The Hague on September 29 facing charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, a UN judge announced Thursday.

Once one of Rwanda's richest men, Kabuga allegedly helped set up hate media that urged ethnic Hutus to "kill Tutsi cockroaches" and funded militia groups. Now in his 80s, Kabuga was arrested in France in May 2020 and transferred to a UN tribunal in The Hague to face charges of playing a key role in the slaughter of 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

"The Chamber orders the trial to commence at the Hague branch with opening statements on the 29th of September... and evidence to start on the 5th of October," Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) judge Iain Bonomy said.

Wearing a dark suit, spotted black tie and striped white shirt, a frail-looking Kabuga listened intently through headphones perched on his head. Earlier he was pushed into the courtroom in a

wheelchair.

Kabuga was originally scheduled to appear in court in Arusha, where the other arm of the MICT resides, but judges had ruled he would remain in The Hague "until otherwise decided." In June, the judges denied a defence objection, ruling Kabuga was indeed fit to stand trial.

Bonomy said on Thursday the defendant would appear "three times a week for two hours at a time." Kabuga is being held at the tribunal's detention unit a few kilometres (miles) away. He will be allowed to attend hearings through a video link if necessary, the judge said.

"Routine is an important part of Mr Kabuga's life," he said. "Whatever is required will be done." Kabuga listened motionless but told Bonomy he wanted to change lawyers when asked if he wished to address the court.

On the run

His current defence lawyer, Emmanuel Altit, pleaded not guilty on his client's behalf at Kabuga's first appearance in November 2020. He faces six charges including one count of genocide and three counts of crimes against humanity:

persecution, extermination and murder.

The UN says 800,000 people were murdered in Rwanda in 1994 in a 100-day rampage that shocked the world. An ally of Rwanda's then-ruling party, Kabuga allegedly helped create the Interahamwe Hutu militia group and the Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), whose broadcasts incited people to murder.

The radio station also identified the hiding places of Tutsis where they were later killed, prosecutors said in the indictment. More than 50 witnesses are expected to appear for the prosecution, which said they needed about 40 hours to wrap their case.

Prosecutors said Kabuga controlled and encouraged RTLM's content and defended the station when the minister of information criticised the broadcasts. Kabuga is also accused of helping to buy machetes that were distributed to genocidal groups, and ordering them to kill Tutsis.

Later fleeing Rwanda, Kabuga spent years on the run using a succession of false passports. Investigators say he was helped by a network of former Rwandan



PARIS, France: File photo shows a courtroom sketch of Felicien Kabuga, one of the last key suspects in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, wearing a protective face mask as a protection due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

allies to evade justice. Following his arrest in a small apartment near Paris, his lawyers argued that Kabuga, whose age is now given as 87 on the indictment, should face

trial in France for health reasons. But France's top court ruled he should be moved to UN custody, in line with an arrest warrant issued in 1997. —AFP

Wildfires in Portugal, Spain contained

LISBON: Massive wildfires in Portugal and Spain were largely under control Thursday after forcing thousands from their homes and destroying large swathes of land. The fires in both countries followed punishing heatwaves and long dry spells, leaving forests parched and primed to burn.

In Portugal, over 1,000 firefighters were still deployed in the Serra da Estrela national park, but the blaze was mostly contained after days of burning out of control. With more hot weather forecast, however, there were fears it could flare up again.

"The fire is under control, but it is not extinguished. Consolidation work will continue in the coming days," civil protection commander Miguel Oliveira told TSF radio. "It is always possible, and very likely, that there will be new reactivations, but we hope that they do not take on worrying proportions," he said. The huge fire in central Portugal was brought under control last week, only to restart again Monday. More than 25,000 hectares (nearly 61,800 acres) of land is estimated to have been scorched by the fire in the UNESCO-listed park, home to diverse wildlife species including wildcats and lizards.

Forecasts are predicting a fresh heatwave on Saturday, the latest in a string of hot spells in Portugal this year. July was the hottest on record in nearly a century. Interior Minister Jose Luis Carneiro said Wednesday "we will experience increased risks" of fires in the coming days due to hot and dry conditions. —AFP

Zionists raid Palestinian HR offices

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: Zionist security forces on Thursday raided the offices of multiple Palestinian human rights groups in the occupied West Bank, which the state has branded "terrorist organisations".

The military said soldiers and police officers "closed seven institutions and confiscated property" in the overnight raids. At the Ramallah offices of human rights group Al Haq, the front door had been welded shut and a Hebrew statement left saying it would remain closed for "security reasons".

"Any activity in this place jeopardises the security of the area, of the security forces and of public order," said a statement seen by AFP. A priest said an Anglican church on the building's ground floor was damaged as troops sought to access the Al Haq offices.

"The soldiers came into the premises around 3:00 am and we started hearing shots and banging on the doors," Father Fadi Diab of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church told AFP. Al Haq is one of six Palestinian groups branded terrorist organisations by Zionist entity in October for their alleged links to leftist militant group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

Zionist entity has not publicly shared any evidence of the alleged ties to the PFLP, which has been labelled a terrorist organisation by many Western governments.

Staff from Al Haq removed the metal sheet covering their office door on Thursday and vowed to get back to work despite computers and other equipment being seized.



RAMALLAH: Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh speaks at the Palestinian Al Haq Foundation in the West Bank city of Ramallah after Zionist entity raided and closed an entrance to their offices, on August 18, 2022. —AFP

"We were established here not by Zionist entity, not by their decision and we will continue our work," Al Haq director Shawan Jabarin told a press conference.

On Thursday morning, tear gas canisters littered the street outside Al Haq's office. The Zionist military said it responded to "rocks and Molotov cocktails" being thrown at soldiers during the overnight raids. West Bank cities are nominally under the full control of the Palestinian Authority but the Zionist security forces carry out frequent incursions, which

are often met with stones or petrol bombs.

EU backs rights groups

Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh vowed solidarity with Al Haq and the other non-governmental organisations raided overnight. "This is not only an NGO, but this is also a State of Palestine institution — therefore as long as they work within the law, we will stand solid with them," Shtayyeh told AFP, as he visited the Al Haq offices. — AFP

Electoral fraud prompted...

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chances of winning a seat in the National Assembly. The Public Authority for Civil ID (PACI) will issue new electoral rolls based on the voters' addresses.

This measure will prevent corrupt candidates from moving voters from one constituency to another, depriving them from a means that could have boosted their chances to win seats in the Assembly. The explanatory note of the Amiri decree said that the fact finding committee, formed on July 5 and presented its report on August 13, conclusively found massive movements of voters by candidates to boost their chances of winning.

The explanatory note said that vote transfers amounted to vote rigging and fraud which resulted in the forgery of the will of the nation. The decree to change the way of voting was welcomed by many. Former National Assembly Speaker and prominent opposition figure Ahmad Al-Saadoun said the government has paved the way to allow the people to freely cast their votes in the process of reforms.

Former MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji said the measure will boost the integrity of elections, but he expressed concerns that it might spark a constitu-

tional controversy. Two weeks ago, the National Assembly was dissolved by an Amiri decree which also called for holding snap elections to elect a new Assembly. The decree cited continued political disputes between the government and opposition MPs as the cause of dissolving the house.

In a televised speech delivered by HH the crown prince two months ago, the Amir vowed to prevent corruption in the forthcoming elections and pledged that the government will not interfere in the election of the Assembly Speaker. Adopting the Civil IDs for voters was one of the major demands by opposition MPs to ensure free and fair elections. No date has been yet decided for the snap polls but under Kuwait's constitution, the new elections must be held within two months of dissolving the Assembly, before October 1 in this case.

In the meantime, the Interior Ministry said yesterday that 10 people suspected of organizing and taking part in the outlawed tribal primaries were remanded for 21 days in jail pending the start of their trial. The people were arrested after organizing the tribal primaries which are banned under the law.

Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Rana Al-Fares yesterday revealed a one-year plan to dismiss all expat employees at Kuwait Municipality. She said the plan starts at the beginning of September when a third of the expat workforce will be served dismissal notices. The second phase begins on January 1 next year and the third on July 1, 2023. Children of Kuwaiti women and stateless people known as Bedoons are exempted from the plan.

the area told AFP. He described scenes of panic in the city of half a million people, where nearly 100 women and 17 newborn babies had to be evacuated from a hospital near the forest. Algerian television showed people fleeing their burning homes, women carrying children in their arms. Local media said 350 people had fled their homes.

Some 39 blazes were ravaging various parts of northern Algeria, according to the fire service, and there were fears that hot winds could spark new ones that authorities are ill-equipped to fight. The scenes sparked fears of a repeat of fires last year which killed at least 90 people and ravaged 100,000 hectares of forest and farmland in the country's north. — AFP

FBI is now US conservatives'...

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On August 11, an armed 42-year-old man attacked the FBI's branch in Cincinnati after writing on social media accounts attributed to him that people should "respond with force" to the raid on Trump and "kill the FBI on sight." The man failed to enter the office in the Ohio city, and was later shot dead by police. One day later, a 46-year-old man in Pennsylvania was arrested for making similar threats. "If You Work For The FBI Then You Deserve To Die," he wrote on social media. "My only goal is to kill more of them before I drop."

Long mythologized in film and television, the FBI - the storied home of the 1930s G-Men and the powerful, inscrutable J Edgar Hoover - has regularly fielded criticism from all sides, O'Reilly told AFP. "Among southern racists in the early 60s, there was a big backlash against the FBI, treating it like the Gestapo" when it investigated the lynchings of African Americans.

The worst period, O'Reilly said, was in the 1960s

Iraq protest camps dig in...

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"We grabbed our pillows and came," Fadel Rahman, a 33-year-old Sadrist, told AFP.

Along with about 20 other people, he said he helped to finance a mawkeb with a contribution of about \$170. "We serve meals to the protesters. There is tea and cold water, which is the most important thing in this heat," Rahman said, as temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). His demand is "to remove the corrupt" - a catch cry of Sadrists who are seeking the dissolution of parliament and an early general election.

More than 10 months on from Iraq's last legisla-

tion, the country still lacks a prime minister and government. Negotiations to end the crisis have stalled against a backdrop of behind-the-scenes haggling and a flood of bitter invective between the two rival camps. The avenue leading to the parliament building in Baghdad is lined by colorful tents shielding the Sadrists from the sun.

In 1995, FBI actions did spark a violent attack. Anti-government extremists bombed a federal office building in Oklahoma City that included the regional FBI headquarters, killing 168 people. The two extremists were motivated in part by the FBI's poor handling of two hostage-like sieges in 1992 and 1993 that turned deadly. But through all of that, the FBI maintained general political and popular support.

The current anti-FBI turn has its roots in Trump's long battle with the bureau's investigations, and specifically its probes into hundreds of his supporters who violently stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. For O'Reilly, the open threats by Trump supporters and politicians are what makes the current moment shocking. "I would guess the overwhelming majority of FBI agents voted for Trump," he said. "So it's just a wild idea that the most conservative elements of the Republican Party see the FBI as a tool of the radical left." — AFP

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In all, their camp is supplied by 70 mawakeb, dishing out around 100 kilograms (220 pounds) each day of rice alone, as well as other food and drinks, at a cost of \$4,000, an organizer told AFP. The lucky ones have mobile air-conditioners that are plugged into the parliament's power supply. Sandwiches are distributed to them by volunteers. The back of a pick-up truck has been transformed into a mobile canteen where stews, rice and beans simmer in large pots. "Every night we get together with my friends to decide on the next day's menu," said Mohamed Hussein, 33, sweating under the sun as he served up lunch. — AFP

Algeria forest blazes...

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been burned to death in their bus as they tried to escape. Several roads in the area were closed. State television reported Thursday morning that Prime Minister Ayman Benabderrahmane was visiting the area. Firefighters were also battling a large blaze in the mountainous area of Souk Ahras, a journalist in