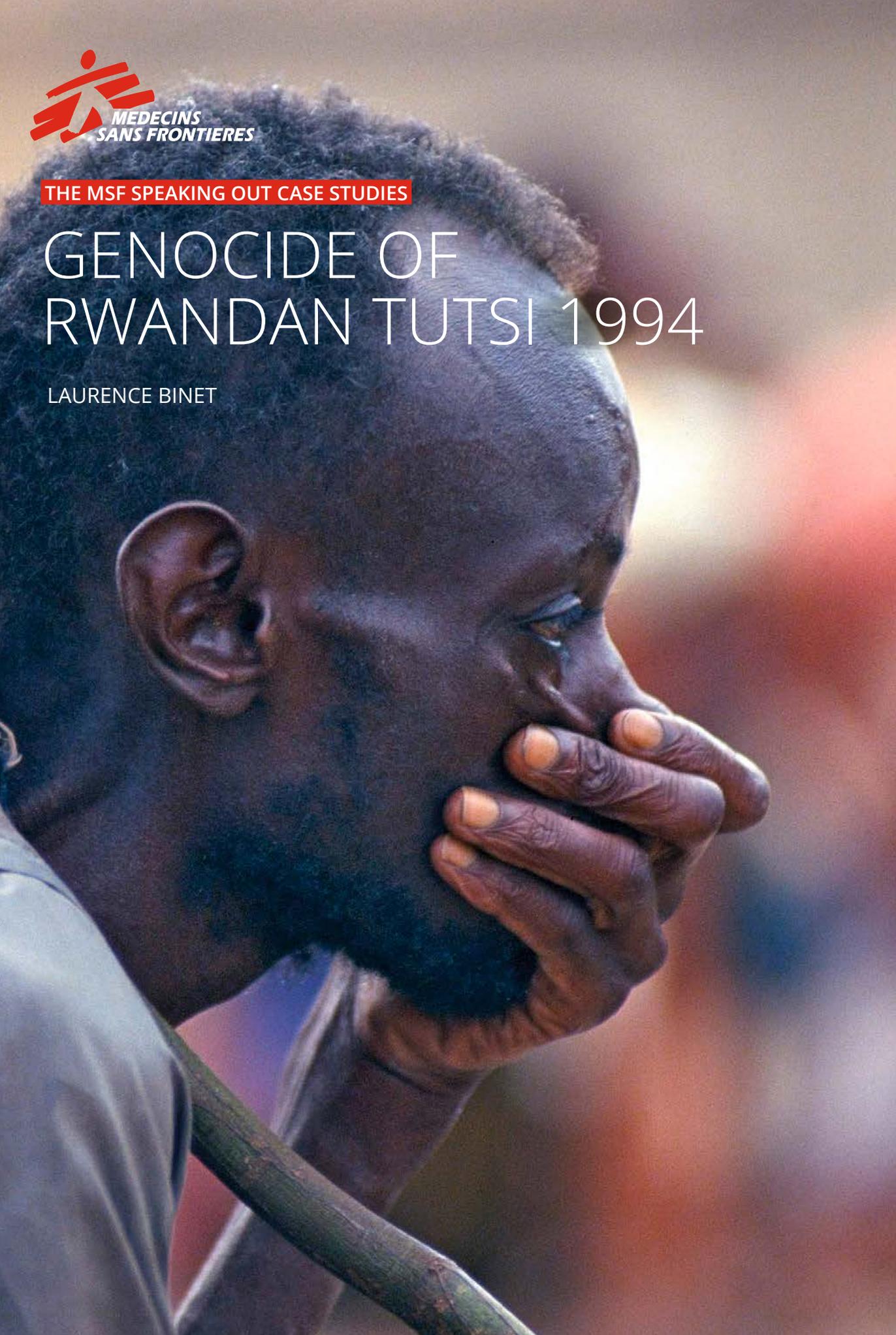




THE MSF SPEAKING OUT CASE STUDIES

GENOCIDE OF RWANDAN TUTSI 1994

LAURENCE BINET



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<https://www.msf.org/speakingout>

FOREWORD

This publication is part of the “Médecins Sans Frontières Speaking Out” case studies series prepared in response to the wish expressed in the 90s by the MSF International Council to provide the movement with literature on MSF *témoignage* (advocacy).

The idea was to create a reference document that would be straightforward and accessible to all and help volunteers understand and adopt the organisation’s culture of speaking out.

It was not to be an ideological manual or a set of guidelines. *Témoignage* cannot be reduced to a mechanical application of rules and procedures as it involves an understanding of the dilemmas inherent in every instance of humanitarian action.

The International Council assigned the project to a director of studies, who in turn works with an editorial committee composed of MSF representatives chosen by the International Board for their experience and expertise. They serve in their capacity as individuals and do not represent their national sections.

Faced with the difficulty of defining the term *témoignage*, the editorial committee focuses the series on case studies in which speaking out posed a dilemma for MSF and thus meant taking a risk.

Key information sources – MSF volunteers’ written and oral recollections – are reconstructed by highlighting documents from the period concerned and interviewing the main actors.

The individuals interviewed speak in the language they choose. They offer both their account of events and their assessment of MSF’s response. The interviews are recorded and transcribed.

Document searches are conducted in the sections’ archives and as far as possible, in media archives.

The research is constrained by practical and financial issues, including locating interviewees and securing their agreement and determining the existence, quality, and quantity of archived materials.

The main text exposes events in chronological order. It includes excerpts from documents and interviews, linked by brief introductions and transitional passages. We rely on document extracts to establish the facts as MSF described and perceived them at the time. When documentation is missing, interviews sometimes fill the gaps. These accounts also provide a human perspective on the events and insight into the key players’ analyses.

This methodology aims at establishing the facts and enables the debates and dilemmas encountered to be recounted without pre-judging the quality of the decisions made.

Preceding the main texts collected, the reader will find a map, a list of abbreviations and an introduction that lays out the context of MSF’s public statements and the key dilemmas they sought to address.

In addition, a detailed chronology reconstructs MSF’s actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period.

Each case study is available in English and in French.

These case studies are essentially designed as an educational tool. Some are now being used as the basis for podcasts and training modules. To reinforce this educational objective, access to all this material is available on the msf.org/speakingout website, and on Google books.

Enjoy your reading !

The SOCS Editorial Committee.
March 2024

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Dr Rony Zachariah

MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994

ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action contre la faim (Action Against Hunger)
AFP	Agence France Presse
CHK	Centre hospitalier de Kigali (Kigali Hospital Complex)
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises (Rwandan Armed Forces)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
MDM	Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)
MSF USA	MSF United States of America
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PSF	Pharmaciens Sans Frontières
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
Sitrep	Situation report, from the field team or from the programme manager.



Click to access the reference material list.
Then click on the reference number to access the video.



Extract of document



Extract of interview

Genocide of Rwandan Tutsi 1994



- MSF programme/early April 1994
- MSF programme/mid-May 1994
- MSF programme/late June 1994

INTRODUCTION

On 6 April 1994, the plane carrying the Rwandan President was shot down as it approached Kigali. The slaughter of the Tutsi minority commenced in the days that followed. Simultaneously, leaders of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), an opposition movement organised by Tutsi exiles in Uganda, launched a military offensive in Rwanda and seized power in Kigali in early July.

From April to July 1994, between 500,000 and one million Rwandan Tutsi were systematically exterminated by militiamen, the Interhamwe, under Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR in French) control. The genocide was the outcome of long-standing strategies implemented by politico-military extremists who roused ethnic resentments against the Tutsi minority. The extremists also killed many Rwandan Hutu who opposed the massacres.

The killings occurred in spite of the presence of UN troops in Rwanda, and the situation was characterised as 'a particularly serious humanitarian crisis'. Members of the UN Security Council were slow to call the Tutsi extermination 'genocide', hence evading the obligation to intervene and stop the slaughter, as stipulated by international law. Ten weeks after the start of the genocide, the UN authorised the French army to intervene. This operation, known as Operation Turquoise, which was undertaken from 23 June until 21 August, saved lives but also facilitated the escape of the FAR into Zaire.

Confronted with genocide, Médecins Sans Frontières met with government officials and issued public statements to try to mobilise governments out of their inertia. Had they deployed armed forces to Rwanda, governments might have incapacitated the killers.

- On 22 April, Médecins Sans Frontières publicly condemned the withdrawal of UNAMIR forces, which left Rwandans alone to face the killers.

- On 18 May, Médecins Sans Frontières publicly asked the French authorities, which had long supported the Rwandan regime, to use their influence to convince the regime to halt the massacres. A similar approach was made to the Belgian authorities.

- On 24 May, Médecins Sans Frontières testified before the UN Commission on Human Rights and presented a report with accounts from its volunteers in the hope of prompting rapid action by UN member states.

- On 18 June, Médecins Sans Frontières called for armed UN intervention.

QUESTIONS AND DILEMMAS

These statements and actions resulted from numerous debates, conflicts and contradictory interpretations of the Rwandan situation and of MSF's role when faced with the following dilemmas:

- ▶ Was it acceptable for Médecins Sans Frontières, as a humanitarian organisation, to remain silent when confronted with genocide?
- ▶ Was it acceptable for Médecins Sans Frontières, as a humanitarian organisation, to call for armed intervention – an action that would lead to loss of human life?
- ▶ Could MSF call on UN member states to pursue other means of action, thereby risking giving legitimacy to ineffective responses, given the nature of genocide?
- ▶ Launched just as France proposed to intervene in Rwanda, was there a risk that Médecins Sans Frontières' appeal for armed intervention would be appropriated for political gain?

GENOCIDE OF RWANDAN TUTSI 1994

From the early 1990s, various MSF sections intervened several times in Rwanda in response to population displacements caused by the civil war.

Following two missions lasting several months in 1990 and 1992, MSF Belgium intervened again in Rwanda in February 1993. Its teams worked in the communes and camps for displaced people in Ruhengeri district in the northwest of the country, close to the Ugandan border.

MSF Holland worked in Rwanda from October 1992, supporting 125,000 displaced people that its teams followed from the camps in Ngarama to those in Murambi, close to Byumba, north of Kigali. At the time, this was the biggest mission ever carried out by the Dutch section of MSF.

In October 1993, in response to an influx of 700,000 refugees fleeing massacres in Burundi that followed the assassination of President Ndadaye, MSF France deployed teams to the camps in Kibongo, Burenge and Nzangwa, in southeast Rwanda, while MSF Belgium and MSF Holland intervened in those in the Butare district.

The massive exodus from Burundi went almost unnoticed by the media, and aid agencies were only involved to a very limited extent. Famine, coupled with a shigellosis epidemic, killed 10,000 people. In November 1993, having tried in vain to alert other international organisations to the crisis, MSF publicly denounced the weakness of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the irregularity and poor quality of its food deliveries.



Burundi Refugee Crisis' - **Invitation** to the Press conference on 2 December 1993 (in French). [V1](#) 

Extract:

Following the bloody massacres in Burundi at the end of October, nearly 600,000 Burundis have fled their country: 350,000 of these refugees have fled to Rwanda and 250,000 to Tanzania. There has been no large-scale distribution of food for a month now. If nothing is done in the next few days, these refugees will be decimated by a dreadful famine. Given the urgency of the situation, MSF and ACF are organising a press conference.



'The exodus of Burundi refugees will cause a humanitarian catastrophe in East Africa, according to two NGOs', **AFP** (France), 2 December 1993 (in French).

Extract:

A humanitarian catastrophe is imminent in Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire, where some 700,000 Burundi's have fled following the attempted putsch of 21 October in Bujumbura, claimed Médecins Sans Frontières and Action contre la Faim on Thursday in Paris... MSF President Rony Brauman said that the [UN]HCR had reacted quickly but that the WFP had mobilised hugely insufficient and "inappropriate" resources, even delivering corn for cattle that needed to be ground for consumption...



Annual report May 1993-April 1994, Rony Brauman, MSF France Board of Director's President, May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

During this year's major crisis, which was the war in Burundi with 700,000 refugees who fled the country and sought asylum in the neighbouring countries of Zaire, Rwanda, and Tanzania, we met practically none of the partners we usually see in refugee emergencies. This cannot be explained by their ignorance of the situation because we asked them to respond. But they were under enormous pressure themselves, with such an enormous number of activities that they were unable to respond to our request. There was very limited mobilisation for this crisis, and I think that, for the first time in our history, we are seeing a certain abandonment of those areas that in fact require a major humanitarian mobilisation.



We were looking after displaced people in Rwanda, people who were fleeing the small RPF incursions in the north. A little later came the Burundi refugees, displaced people who were quite mobile. We anchored our programmes in the local structures and implemented them in such a way as to cover the local populations, too. In the south, we launched a classic refugee assistance programme. We had a huge problem with food being diverted by the Rwandan authorities, which we tried to expose because there was a massive famine in the camps.

Dr Dominique Boutriau, MSF Belgium, Rwanda Programme Manager, (in French).

In January and February 1994, demonstrations by extremist Hutu and the assassination of a government minister, Félicien Gatabazi, renewed tension in Kigali and served as a warning of potential renewed violence. MSF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) developed an emergency action plan for implementation if local hospitals should become overwhelmed, and stored equipment and drugs in the courtyard of the Kigali Hospital Complex (KHC), where they also established an admissions centre for the wounded.



Rwanda Update, MSF Holland, 15 January 1994 (in English).

Extract:

The actual situation in Kigali is one of unrest, tension, violence, banditism and nobody knowing what is going to happen. Violent demonstrations took place last Saturday, whereby one of our local secretaries was severely harassed and our expat administrator was looted. Yesterday night, one of our expats was involved in an incident. A high-ranking person, the ex-ambassador to Italy, had a grenade thrown into his car. Fortunately, he only suffered minor injuries. In Bujumbura, the Rwandan (and French) embassies were looted.



'MSF opens admissions centre for wounded in Kigali', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 23 February 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Since yesterday evening, the MSF centre has admitted 25 wounded people. As the hospital has limited capacity, MSF has agreed to set up a 'bandages tent' and tents for patient observation and screening. The operation is being coordinated with the ICRC according to a pre-arranged action plan. An admissions centre has also been set up at the hospital in Butare.



In February, the Head of Mission in Rwanda, sent me a fax saying, "That's it, we have to prepare for a clash." He organised a meeting with the other medical organisations, the Belgian Red Cross, Action contre la Faim, the different MSF sections and the ICRC. We shared out responsibility for the different hospitals in Kigali among us and said to ourselves, "There are going to be clashes, we've got to be ready to handle a large number of wounded." We were given responsibility for Kigali Hospital Complex, the huge public Kigali hospital. We repositioned a 15 m³ water tank inside the hospital and put-up tents at the entrance to create a triage centre for many wounded. When you make plans for a sorting centre you are clearly expecting many wounded. But in our heads, we were, of course, expecting the wounded to be civilians. Given that the peace process was failing, 'ethnist' ideology was becoming rampant, and the ever-present violence, we thought that if the situation continued to worsen there was a huge risk that some elements in the Government would target Rwandan Tutsis in a big way. What we were expecting were pogroms.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).

Despite having been in Rwanda for several years and having 126 volunteers in the country, MSF viewed the slaughter and the ensuing events as a civil war and 'inter-ethnic fighting' like those faced by its teams in Liberia or Somalia.



Minutes of the Board Meeting of MSF France, 25 March 1994 (in French).

Extract:

In Rwanda, Marc G visited just one camp. Things are better; food is of good quality and is getting through. The guerrillas are in the north. If there were riots or civil war, food shipments to the south would be interrupted.

We hear that 200,000 people who have taken refuge in Rwanda might return to Burundi and to Tanzania. [If this is true] we might be able to cut the size of the MSF France mission from 44 to 30 or 25 quite soon... In Tanzania, there are an enormous number of refugees: 700,000. This is on the scale of Kurdistan. The MSF team's response to this is not political but technical (almost too technical), and thus seems a bit lost. MSF workers feel they are "not exploiting their nutrition training to the full". There's a kind of 'travel agency' mentality. They go to one place and if they don't like it, they move on... they give no thought to the political aspects: the right to asylum, why people are fleeing, the nature of the enormous conflict between Hutu and Tutsi.



There was already a huge amount of pressure on the Tutsi, in that there were attacks by Tutsi in the north and population displacements. We were in a country at war, which is routine when you've been with MSF for a long time. Our Head of Mission was aware of the political situation. She knew that the Tutsi were being pursued more than the others, but not the extent of it.

Dr Dominique Boutriau, MSF Belgium, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).



MSF cannot claim – any more than the United Nations – to have said at any time: "there's a genocide in the making". I never heard that. I never heard anyone say: "machetes are being distributed" or anything like that. We were entirely focused on this advancing front, the problems of the refugees, and the huge numbers of displaced people.

Dr Eric Goemaere, MSF Belgium, General Director, (in French).



I think that the analysis of the conflict in Rwanda was poor and not very relevant. Even though we'd been working there for several years, there was no thinking in the group here, and even less internationally, that integrated the work of others to better understand the conflict. Consequently, MSF did very little to sound the alarm about how dangerous the situation was... We didn't have much of a political understanding of the conflict. That's how I saw it when I started working on the Rwanda Desk and when I went there in June/July 1993. The two Heads of Mission in the field were pretty much doing a good job. I was especially impressed by the Dutch team, which was assisting internally displaced people in the north of the country. From a medical point of view, they had aspects of their programme that were very well run, and they saved many lives. But at the same time, I felt ill at ease with them because there was little attention paid to the nature and dynamics of the conflict. It was largely a material response to the consequences of the conflict. I don't think we properly considered the conflict's gravity or severity.

I thought, "It's a country where life could be good. Why is it that people seem sad all day?" I asked our driver-translator, Ignace, "I find your country interesting, but what makes you so sad?" He replied, "You don't realise that every one of us goes home to our lonely little houses

at night and for years now, sit with our teeth chattering as we wonder when they'll come to murder us." Afterwards, as I planned evaluation trips with him and the medical coordinator, I found him increasingly reluctant. He asked me, "Where am I going to sleep in Ruhengeri?" I asked him, "Tell me exactly what's worrying you, we'll find a solution, what's bothering you?" He replied, "I don't like sleeping in dirty places, I have to sleep somewhere with at least basic standards of cleanliness." He was a well-educated, clean guy, like me, no more no less. When we went on trips like that and spent one or two nights in places that weren't very clean, I found him a bit fussy. But when I thought a bit more about it, I realised that he was a Rwandan Tutsi and that it wasn't the dirt he feared in Ruhengeri, but of being killed. He wasn't scared of dirt; he feared death... The real criticism we can make of MSF is that we had a real presence on the ground that gave us the means to have gathered information and data to expose the whole plan and we did not do it. Neither MSF France nor the other sections called a meeting to organise this.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).



What seems strange to me, in hindsight, is that we in MSF did not know what was going on. We had a lot of people in the country, yet I was not aware of information from MSF people that there was this tension in the country; that the Hutu were planning to kill the Tutsi. That means that we knew nothing about the context, so what exactly were we doing? The people working for MSF Holland in Rwanda were not typical emergency types. They were people for slow, calm situations, technical people who were not concerned by the political context. Before 6 April we did not have the impression of an unstable situation, changing all the time. Rwanda had refugee and displaced camps, but it looked like a stable country. Even the Burundi Tutsi in the camps thought like that or they wouldn't have stayed in the camps. They would have returned earlier to Burundi. To tell you the truth, until the day I left, even after I arrived back in Holland, I didn't know that it was a genocide. I had never worked before in a genocide. I didn't know what a genocide was. I knew what a war was. War is where everyone is killing everybody all the time – two or three parties or more, and they're all killing each other. To me this was the same type of situation: a civil war where everyone kills each other.

Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland Emergency Cell Coordinator, in Rwanda in April 1994 (in English).



I'd been working for MSF since 1991 and no volunteer in those countries had ever warned me about anything. And yet, in Burundi, massacres were taking place. We perceived the genocide through the lens of 'an attack on a refugee camp', not through the lens of the Rwandan context. We saw it through the Tutsi from Burundi, who were refugees in Rwanda and who we'd taken care of. If they were refugees, it was clearly because they had fled something. It wasn't a war. But that wasn't picked up in Burundi. It was viewed with that ability of MSF of getting used to certain situations, of seeing it as somehow normal: "After all, it's war, it's horrible, that's the way it is." A somewhat fatalistic attitude. Sometimes, there are those at MSF who think it normal that people can die without our knowing why. In Burundi, a lot of people were dying, but it was as if the MSF people thought it was normal because there was a war. They thought it normal that these people were refugees and that no one was asking why they had fled, what they had fled and who they really were. This attitude of accepting that "the world is tragic but at least we are here to help" is the reaction of an alien, of a saviour who's no longer interested in people's problems. I think the teams in Burundi and Rwanda

were in hero mode. Massacres were taking place, and it wasn't our problem. Our problem was to tend to the injured.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor (in French).

Following the attack on the Rwandan President's plane on 6 April 1994, the start of the massacres and the increased fighting between the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) of the Habyarimana Government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) prevented MSF teams from entering the refugee camps, since their safety was threatened. Locked up in their houses, it was impossible for volunteers to protect those in danger who came to ask for help, particularly local staff members.



'Escape from Rwanda', **from the diary** of Jan Debyser, MSF Holland Project Coordinator, Murambi – Rwanda, April 1994. Published in *Ins & Out* (MSF Holland internal bulletin) in June 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Thursday 7 April. A Tutsi family is seeking refuge at our centre. Their house has been attacked. The man claims that he hasn't dared to sleep at home for a week... A bit later another Tutsi, seriously wounded by machetes and sticks, comes to the house begging for help. About 20 Tutsi are now staying on the premises... In our ambulance, Maryse and I drive up the hill to the centre of Murambi until we come upon a crowd of Hutu, armed with knives and machetes, barring the road, and ordering us to get out of the car. We are accused of hiding a Tutsi they are looking for. A few Hutu are becoming increasingly aggressive... To the person who seems to be most amenable to reason I explain that we are only sheltering a Tutsi family, mainly women and children. I then ask what the person they are looking for has done. The crowd roars, "The President is dead, that's the reason!" ... Someone shows me a hand grenade, asking me whether I know what that is. Finally, we agree that they can search our premises. We have no choice but to give in... On the way I ask what will happen to the man if they find him. "He will be killed" is the reply... The group is threatening to attack the house if we refuse to hand over the man... A little while later the man they have been searching for steps outside the gate, his hands up. A few hotheads immediately begin to beat him up. Maryse begins to cry. A few Hutu want to reassure her, saying that nothing will happen to her. "But you are going to kill that man", she cries. The Hutu order us to walk back to our car. Behind our back Godefroid, one of our guards, is dragged off. We call out that he belongs to our staff, but no one listens. The man who has been handed over is being beaten with sticks and hacked upon with machetes... When we arrive back home [we discover that] the Tutsi man surrendered to them has been killed between the banana trees."



'MSF surgical teams to leave for Kigali', MSF United Kingdom **Press release**, 8 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

In the next few hours, Médecins Sans Frontières will try and send two surgical teams and ten tonnes of medical and surgical equipment into Kigali to assist victims of the fighting which has wrecked the Rwandan capital over the past two days. The forty MSF expatriate

staff stationed in Kigali is confined to their homes by fighting. Half of the staff will remain in the capital to try and assist the wounded and be backed up by the two surgical teams on stand-by in Bujumbura, Burundi, and Brussels as soon as their transfer is feasible. Those volunteers who are not essential to the surgical program will be evacuated as soon as possible.

Rwandan employees of Médecins Sans Frontières were killed in an attack, but yet no more details are available. MSF is extremely concerned for the safety of all its local staff. At this moment the situation in Kigali is extremely tense and violent. It is impossible to move around by car. According to information collected locally by the MSF teams, there are thousands of dead and wounded. The wounded in the central hospital, in the dispensaries and in the streets of the city need immediate attention and many urgently need surgery. MSF hopes to begin collecting the wounded and operating in the hospital as soon as it is possible for its surgical teams to get around. It is also very tense in the south of the country, especially in Butare, where MSF is providing medical assistance to Burundian refugees- mainly Hutus. For security reasons, MSF has evacuated 32 of its staff to Bujumbura, while a team of ten continue to work in the camps. In the Burenge region, MSF evacuated its team of 30 volunteers and all its local staff to Kirundo province in Burundi after fighting intensified in the villages near the refugee camps.

On 8 April 1994, the MSF France team was evacuating the southeast Rwanda camps towards Burundi but didn't manage to get its local employees across the border. Most of them were of Tutsi origin and the team had to resign itself to leaving them behind.



End of mission report, Loïc Schneider, MSF France logistician in Rwanda, April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

It was when we were visiting the team in Burenge... that we heard about the assassination of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. After a day on stand-by, to see which way the wind was blowing, and a night when we could hear shots, we evacuated the country for Burundi the next morning. The previous night's shootings had already claimed many victims. Revenge attacks were increasing, and Kigali was the scene of massacres on every street corner. The evacuation plan was being set up, but the chronic instability had made us all numb to it. Burenge and Nzangwa are close to the border. The two teams would meet up at customs and we would move on together to Burundi, to Kirundo, where an MSF team was already working and was ready to accommodate 30 expatriates. We got together the local staff from the compound (where the team lived). Those who wanted could come along. Some fifty locals (the majority) came with us. The convoy was organised quickly and effectively, despite the lack of instructions: what should we leave? What should we take? What should we destroy? We took the radio, some food and blankets in case we needed them, and our personal effects. We set off for customs with a dozen vehicles including a 20-tonne truck carrying the local staff. Fifty metres from customs there was a military checkpoint. The order: the Rwandans must not cross the border. The team was alarmed: that would mean leaving half the staff behind in the civil war. Then an idea went round: we'll pass the Rwandans off as Zaireans travelling without papers. And we almost tried! But very soon the idea appeared too risky. To attempt to trick already suspicious customs officers without any preparation and with the risk that

someone might betray himself by speaking the local language which the Zaireans were not supposed to know, would have had heavy consequences for them as well as for us. We negotiated with the army and asked them to let us go the last fifty metres towards customs and discuss it later. They agreed to this.

The Nzangwa-Maza team wasn't there. They contacted us by VHF radio and told us that they were also hemmed in by the army, which didn't even want to let the expatriates through. This could be explained by the fact that the soldiers did not want the whites to leave; their presence was a guarantee of stability, and their departure synonymous with war and chaos. We persuaded the chief customs officer to write a letter to try and get the obstruction lifted and thus enable the Nzangwa-Maza team to join us at the border. The Burenge coordinator, an unarmed military emissary, and I left (after much negotiation) with the letter to try and resolve the situation. After an hour and a thorough search and check, we got what we wanted.

We returned to the border. It was 3 pm.

Several problems had cropped up in our absence:

- Cars registered in Rwanda (the majority) wouldn't be allowed through
- Rwandan staff (well known to the customs people) wouldn't be allowed through either
- The Burundi border would close at 6 pm so we absolutely had to get through before 5.30 pm

'A', newly arrived in the Burenge mission, tried to negotiate a passage for the Rwandans. Time was passing and night was about to fall. The Nzangwa-Maza team, which had already had to leave its Rwandan staff behind, wanted to go through as soon as possible. By contrast, some of the Burenge team wouldn't leave without their staff, even if it meant spending the night (!) at customs.

At 5.15 pm, 'A' was still negotiating, but only for four Tutsi women who were certain to be killed. The customs officers still refused point blank. 'A' started to shout out loud, which created considerable tension and led to a temporary break in the negotiations. Then the coordinators of each camp made their decision: the Rwandan staff would set off again with the impounded vehicles towards the Nzangwa-Maza compound. Emotional scenes followed. I said good-bye to my driver, who had been with me for several months, and to others who I liked a lot, but I felt I had done all I could to try and get them to come with us. Other expats burst into tears at the sight of them leaving. 'A', depressed by his failure, went to find the coordinators, and informed them bluntly that they would have the death of 30 Rwandans on their conscience. He was still convinced we could have got them through, that nothing could happen to a group of 30 expats overnight at the border...

Everyone gulped back their tears and their anger, and at last we went through with our Zairean staff, who were allowed to leave the country, but only after another strict control. It was 5.45 pm. The rest of the journey was uneventful. Nobody felt like talking. We passed the Burundi border and arrived at the MSF-Kirundo mission to spend the night. The following day everyone went down to Bujumbura. This was a quiet trip through superb landscape. There was a rift in the group between the majority, who had wanted to go through without the staff, and the others who thought that we should have continued to negotiate, that we had let 40 people go to their deaths. In Bujumbura, during sessions organised by two headquarters staff that had come to help us 'air our dirty laundry', all the animosity came out.

The coordinators' difficult decision to go ahead without the Rwandan staff had been the right one. It was out of the question that we should spend the night with those soldiers who had no commanding officer and were drunk as well. Moreover, MSF cannot infringe the laws of the host country. The Rwandan staff continued to work in the camps, but we heard that 17 of them were killed, and, no doubt, the rest met with the same fate.



Minutes of the Board Meeting of MSF France, 20 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Serge Stefanaggi commented on the story told by those who had come back from Rwanda, saying that MSF had refused to bribe the checkpoint soldiers to allow local MSF staff to cross. If this were true, Serge said it was unacceptable, and questioned the policy of MSF in this matter.

Philippe: from now on we need to weigh up our decisions regarding the risks we might be exposing people to in this country, i.e. we need to be careful, take time to think about what we are exposing our teams to in terms of safety, and the people who will be working with us, people we'll be helping and taking care of, and what stance to take if we have to work with people who have blood on their hands. These people were massacred because they were Tutsi, because they were with MSF, because MSF is perceived as being pro-Tutsi, as are most humanitarian organisations in Rwanda. In the past, all the agencies tended to overemploy Tutsi because of their skills, their diplomas, family reasons, because it was easier... we weren't vigilant enough in this area.

In Kigali, MSF volunteers, together with the ICRC and Belgian Cooperation doctors, tried to pick up the casualties in the streets of the city and to treat them in the hospital complex (KHC).



'Médecins Sans Frontières assists the wounded in Kigali hospital', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 9 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

According to early reports from our teams on the ground, more than 50 severely injured people will have to undergo serious operations as soon as possible. The Rwandan teams working at the hospital are exhausted and don't have the correct equipment to treat them. However, a relative calm has returned to the capital, where shootings are more sporadic than in recent days. Médecins Sans Frontières has therefore decided to send a special plane from Europe to carry 12 tonnes of medical and surgical equipment (blood bags, blood tests, surgery equipment, anaesthetic, etc.). Two surgical teams, currently on stand-by in Bujumbura, will travel to Kigali either by road or on an Aviation Sans Frontières plane as soon as the capital's airport is accessible.

Now the MSF medical team, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross and Belgian Cooperation doctors in Kigali, are providing first aid for the casualties. The ICRC has started to pick up the wounded in the streets of the city.



'At least one thousand dead in Kigali, says ICRC', **AFP** (France), 8 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

For its part, in an official statement issued in Paris, the humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières also reported that there were "thousands dead and wounded in the capital", according to estimates made by its teams on the ground...



'Thousands feared massacred in Kigali', *Irish Times* (Ireland), 9 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

"It is not clear who is in control, movement around the city is impossible, everybody is terrified", a spokesperson for the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières in Nairobi (MSF) said after phone contact with staff in Rwanda. The group also reported that dozens of locally recruited aid workers had been slaughtered.



The news from the field was alarming... At first the MSF team tried to work from the house, as in times of war. They started to say that it was a strange war because the people they treated in the evening were found killed the following day.

Dr Bernard Pécoul, MSF France, General Director (in french).

On 10 April 1994, the evacuation of MSF volunteers commenced owing to the lack of equipment, anesthetic and blood, and the high level of risk they faced.



MSF France **Internal Situation Report** No. 3, April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Belgian Cooperation doctors have been working with the MSF teams in place. The MSF team has tended, as best it could, to the less serious injuries in tents set up within the hospital enclosure. There is no water in the hospital, apart from an MSF reserve of 20,000 litres. In the middle of the afternoon, the ICRC decided to suspend activity at the hospital for safety reasons, as the tension in town was becoming too strong. So, the MSF team returned to their houses... In the evening the MSF France team in Kigali decided that the risk of violent confrontation raised questions over the continued presence of a team in the capital. It preferred to evacuate the capital for a while, even if it meant returning in a few days' time, once the worst of the clashes was over... MSF Belgium and MSF Holland sent a plane from Amsterdam to Nairobi during the night of Saturday/Sunday with the intention of reaching Kigali.

As Belgian citizens were particularly targeted, MSF Belgium decided to first evacuate its Belgian volunteers still in Rwanda.



'All members of MSF Belgium still in Rwanda will be evacuated', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 10 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

In view of developments in the country and as a precautionary measure, Médecins Sans Frontières has decided to evacuate its members of Belgian nationality who are still

present in the country. Circumstances permitting, they will be replaced by medical staff of other nationalities.

Eventually, between 8 and 12 April 1994, all MSF teams were evacuated to Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda (for MSF Holland teams based in Byumba) or Nairobi via Kigali. The only MSF mission maintained was in the prefecture of Butare in the south of the country where the Prefect (the regional government administrator) refused to obey the government's orders, and the militia and the army were not yet active in the region. However, as a precautionary measure, 19 Belgian MSF mission volunteers were evacuated and replaced.



'Médecins Sans Frontières - update on aid operations in Rwanda', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 11 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Butare – the camps – replacement of Belgian staff still present in the refugee camps with staff of another nationality will be complete within 48 hours. Right now, nine MSF members are in place. Ten other non-Belgian doctors and nurses will reach the camps within 48 hours... the teaching hospital is now largely empty of patients and hospital staff. MSF sent a medical-surgical team to the hospital to try to provide a basic service. Kigali: two surgical teams and 20 tonnes of equipment are in Nairobi waiting for the military to authorise transportation on a military aircraft bound for Kigali. These teams are working in close cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

On 11 April 1994, the MSF volunteers who had left Kigali arrived at Nairobi airport where a medical outpost had been set up to accommodate casualties. They told journalists of the massacres they had witnessed.



'News of evacuated MSF staff' MSF International Secretariat **Situation Report**, 12 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Samantha Bolton, press officer Nairobi, met the teams returning from Kigali off the plane yesterday evening. The MSF Belgium, France and Holland teams are all totally traumatised. They all say, "It's total butchery, there is nothing we can do". Apparently as they were driven to Kigali airport by the French military, the road was lined with headless bodies and they witnessed ten Tutsi women being killed... Journalists just out of Kigali told Samantha that while the RPF is looking for French expats, the Hutu army/presidential guard are looking for Belgians. Only the ICRC, known to be Swiss, are free to move inside the country. Even the most hardened correspondents are totally shocked. All report mass killing of Tutsi. Even Belgian whites married to Tutsi, as well as their children, are being killed.

Every day, the MSF Holland team based in Goma, Zaire, talked with Zairean soldiers posted on the border with Rwanda. The soldiers said that, since the beginning of the massacres, many Rwandan civilians trying to escape by reaching the no-man's-land separating the two states had been killed by Rwandan soldiers as they crossed the border.



The first big influx of people into Zaire across that border was around 15 April when 3,000 people arrived in a small town about 30 km from Goma. We went there and started to distribute plastic sheeting, but they only stayed for 24 hours and then they were gone. The story afterwards was that they were intimidated by the local population who were pro-Hutu. This is where I made the link because the border between Rwanda and Zaire is totally fake – so the links between the Banyahutus and the Rwandans is very strong, and those people were intimidated. Also, some were told that nothing was happening in Rwanda now: “You just go back – everything is fine.” So, a lot of them went back or they dispersed in the population and were never found again. That was the only really big group that we received until the middle of June when other people were pushed over. A lot of people who came had arms hanging off their shoulders. There were big hacks across their heads, and they just talked about how they were a group of 40 people and “I was the only one who made it.” There were 7-year-old twin boys who had made it across, who were hacked everywhere and they just – you know, very straight, no tears – they described what happened to their families, to their homes, to everything... Every day I was sending these letters to Amsterdam – updates about what was going on. I got emotionally involved – it took a big toll on me. That’s why I left in June. I couldn’t deal with it – it still makes me cry.

*Rachel Kiddell-Monroe, MSF Holland coordinator, Goma (Zaire), January to June 1994
(in English).*

On 12 April 1994, MSF France sent a fax to the Communications and Operations Directors of all sections asking them not to specify in public communiqués the origin of the surgical teams arriving in Rwanda, in order to protect the Belgian volunteers.



Fax from MSF France’s President and operations and communications teams to Directors of Communications and Operations of all MSF sections, 12 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

As decided this weekend, we would like to remind you of the need to be extremely careful in any communication you make. If you are preparing a press release on this subject, or should you be in touch with any journalists, we urge you not to specify MSF Belgium for obvious reasons around the safety of our teams. We fear the repercussions of such an announcement, especially if relayed on extremist Hutu Radio. News of the team’s arrival in a Belgian military aircraft is already likely to be badly received. We suggest that any communication should indicate that ‘Médecins Sans Frontières’ is sending two surgical teams to the Rwandan capital, without specifying which section is concerned. Can we agree on a common official statement to be sent simultaneously by all European sections?

At a teleconference at 3 pm the same day, the Communications Directors of the various MSF sections agreed to provide the press with all the information gathered by MSF on the situation in Kigali.



Minutes of international communications teleconference on Rwanda, 12 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Many journalists are looking for eyewitness accounts of the massacres in Kigali and would like to interview MSF evacuees. The communications departments have agreed that all MSF accounts of the situation in Kigali can be communicated to the press.

On 13 April 1994, MSF told the press that Rwandan refugees had arrived in Burundi and Zaire.



'Refugees arrive massively at Burundi', **AFP** (France), 13 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

According to the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), 3,000 Burundi refugees heading for their homeland and Rwandan Tutsis fleeing theirs arrived in Kirundo (northern Burundi) on Wednesday morning. MSF also said that 10,000 people from Rwanda have taken refuge in Zaire in the last few days.

An MSF surgical team arrived from Bujumbura in Kigali in an ICRC convoy and set to work – under the ICRC flag – in a field hospital. [V2](#)



'ICRC surgical team arrives in Kigali', **AFP** (France), 13 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

A Médecins Sans Frontières (France) medical team with 5 tonnes of equipment has joined the ICRC convoy.



'ICRC says massacres spreading in Rwanda', **AFP** (France), 18 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

"In Kigali, both at the central hospital complex and in a field hospital with two operating theatres, ICRC doctors, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and volunteer doctors are operating round the clock on dozens of casualties," added Mr Thevoz (ICRC), stressing that "this is wartime surgery. There are appalling machete wounds..."



On 13 April 1994, we reached Kigali with an MSF surgical team of five. Preliminary contacts with the ICRC in Geneva, Bujumbura and Kigali enabled us to join an ICRC convoy leaving from Bujumbura. We thought that rioting and revenge against the Tutsi community would follow the assassination of President Habyarimana and that we would have to wait a few days to be able to deal with the casualties properly. When we arrived in Kigali, we had our first discussions with the ICRC. We intended to work at the KHC [Kigali Hospital Complex].

On Thursday 14 April, we visited the KHC. It's an enormous hospital made up of several buildings, with several hundred beds. A few days before our arrival, there were up to a thousand dead in the hospital mortuary. At the time of our visit, there were still 400 bodies there. Seeing this and following a quick talk with the few wounded Tutsi who had escaped alive, we had to face up to facts: the hospital was being used as a slaughterhouse. The injured Tutsi owed their lives to Hutu friends or to the greed of some assassins who decided to keep them alive a bit longer so that they could get some money out of them. It therefore seemed impossible for us to work in this 'hospital'. A hospital is, first and foremost, hospitality. Even if the circumstances didn't allow for high standards of care, we had a duty to treat all the casualties with dignity and without any discrimination. How could we accept a situation in which the casualties were sorted according to their community, and then executed within the hospital complex? We decided to work under ICRC coordination, in a field hospital set up in the Centre of the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, on Kyovu Avenue. Setting up the hospital was greatly facilitated by the absence of any serious cuts in the water or electricity supplies or telephone service in the Kyovu district (a district of Kigali). There was only limited combat between the FAR and the RPF. In the city, things were horrific. From the terraces of the ICRC field hospital, we could see the militia executing their victims at the barriers. Some of them only just managed to reach the hospital; others were killed at the door. For any family seeking to flee Kigali, not having Hutu written on their identity cards meant immediate death by the roadside. The bodies were pushed indiscriminately to one side...

Every morning a convoy of ambulances (Rwandan Red Cross volunteers and ICRC delegates) left for the various districts of the city to try to get the casualties out to the ICRC field hospital. I joined the ICRC delegates in this operation. As a doctor, my role was to assess the severity of the wounds before evacuating the wounded to the ICRC field hospital. The hospital had a 150-bed capacity. We thought it best to keep the beds for the most seriously wounded. Moreover, the casualties risked being executed during transportation. The medical triage consisted of selecting and transporting to the hospital those whose wounds were so serious that they would probably die without surgery. The religious institutions that had taken in casualties phoned the ICRC delegation requesting the evacuation of the patients.

On Friday 15 April we went to Gikondo, a district of Kigali. The district had been completely barricaded by the militia. We had to negotiate our way through each barrier. The message was clear: "You can go through but there's no point. We'll kill them all. There are no casualties and, even if you find some, we will kill them." The militia searched all the houses. Through the open windows we could see them looking for their victims inside cupboards, searching the smallest crevice in search of a Tutsi.

The religious institution we went to had been attacked. Apart from the burnt corpses and human remains, only the walls remained. The churches had also been transformed into slaughterhouses. Survivors were found in Gikondo market. The Interahamwe wouldn't let us go there, and they finished their 'work'. When we left the district of Gikondo, the militia looked under our vehicles to check that nobody was escaping by clinging to the chassis.

*Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).
Extract from "Les Politiques de la Haine (The Policies of Hatred): Rwanda-Burundi 1994-1995", Les Temps Modernes, July-August 1995, No. 583 (in French).*



We had a lot of traumatic amputations, especially forearms. The killers attacked their victims with machetes and the victims put their arms in front of their faces to protect themselves. So they weren't clean amputations. We were obliged to finish the amputation, but the limbs were still in one piece on arrival. The leg cases tended to be the result of field gun or Kalashnikov fire. We had a lot of "zombies", people who had been buried alive. Few patients turned up alone. Most were brought to the hospital by villagers, who left them at the hospital door and then left. There were a lot of pulmonary contusions because they'd been crushed. Some people were completely distraught and couldn't even communicate. We also had quite a lot of soldiers, in waves, after the attacks.

*Monique Doux, MSF France/ICRC team in Kigali, Anaesthetic Nurse,
3 May to 13 June 1994 (in French).*

MSF and the ICRC agreed on operational and communications arrangements. MSF teams were to be under the banner of ICRC. The ICRC delegate was to be the only spokesperson. [V3](#) [V4](#) [V5](#)



MSF Situation report – Rwanda No. 7, 14 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Potential for confusion: the work must be done exclusively under cover of the ICRC. For reasons of safety – it is best not to mention MSF when speaking on the radio. For communications in general, talk about MSF without mentioning any specific nationality... political relations with the RPF and FAR are managed by the ICRC. The Rwandans do not realise that there are two distinct organisations, so MSF is working under the flag of the ICRC...

Medical action: This structure (ICRC hospital) is on the FAR side. Consequently, the ICRC is negotiating access and protection for the wounded on the other side. At the KHC, the FAR are trying to protect them but, in view of the massacres carried out at this hospital, few Tutsis will come here for treatment. The ICRC is trying to ensure that all the casualties are accepted at the field hospital... Communication: the ICRC mentions MSF in all its official statements. Regarding international communication, there is no problem in referring to MSF's work in Kigali (with the ICRC). We were asked not to make a statement on military positions or a major political declaration on the Tutsi or Hutu. An agreement has been reached between Jean-Hervé and the ICRC coordinators. The ICRC will deal with radio and TV appeals... When the installation phase is finished and when conditions are sufficiently safe, MSF will start to act independently again (but still under ICRC coordination).



Minutes of the Board Meeting of MSF France, 20 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The team in the capital had asked to leave because of the confusion downtown. We decided to take them out and to send in a completely new team. Hence, we now have a surgical team of six people in Kigali and have chosen to work for security reasons with

the ICRC, under the ICRC logo and coordination, with the obligation to be discreet with regards to communication: i.e. to give interviews from Kigali only after ICRC agreement and only on technical rather than political subjects. Concerning general MSF communication from Paris, agreements were made between Paris and Geneva. The team is working in difficult conditions, with injured of all origins, but no violence have been carried out at the hospital since it opened. The level of care is acceptable. The team was recently reduced to four because of increasing insecurity. We have decided to stay: for the patients, for the Rwandan staff who we cannot leave to be massacred, and because we cannot leave the country without a foreign presence. Today, all the RPF is interested in is taking Kigali before the UN arrives. As regards our policy of external communication, after agreement with the ICRC, we started to clearly make our views known.



We knew that the ICRC was going in and that they needed surgeons. Fairly quickly we offered to go with them. They accepted, but they asked us to be identified as ICRC people, without the MSF logo.

Dr Marc Gastellu-Etchegorry, MSF France, Deputy Director of Operations, (in French).



I don't think [speaking out] was even the problem at the time. The main issue was that there were to be only ICRC people in the same place. That's all. I don't think we even discussed speaking out. It was just: "there's only one team and only one boss, Philippe Gaillard, who has overall responsibility."

Dr Brigitte Vasset, MSF France, Director of Operation, (in French).



We had placed our teams under the banner of the ICRC, and we had forbidden ourselves to speak out, of course. We weren't allowed to. That was the agreement that had been struck with the ICRC. It was for Philippe Gaillard of ICRC to speak about the situation. No one else spoke... What's more he gave a very good account of what was going on. There was no MSF statement as such, but in any case, I always thought that, if we could have spoken on behalf of MSF, we couldn't have put it any better than he did... So, either due to the gravity of the situation or because of our cowardice, we accepted that Philippe Gaillard would speak and that we would not. And then at a certain point, when Jean-Hervé was over there, we started to think, "What are we doing?"

Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department (in French).

On 15 April 1994, an MSF Belgium surgical team, blocked at Kigali airport, returned to Nairobi. During an exploratory mission, another MSF Belgium team provided equipment for the hospital in Gitarama. Food and water distribution points were set up on the road from Kigali to Burundi.



'Rwanda - Burundi: update on MSF activities', MSF Belgium **Press release**, - Brussels, 15 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Kigali: a surgical team comprising six MSF workers arrived the day before yesterday via the Burundi border and moved into an annex of the Kigali Hospital Complex (KHC) where it is tending to the injured, in collaboration with the ICRC. A team sent to Kigali airport via Nairobi, however, was unable to reach the town centre because of the fighting, and this morning had to return to Nairobi from where it will continue to Butare. The provinces of Butare and Bugesera: MSF staff numbers have been boosted to cope better with the Burundi refugees in the camps in Butare and Bugesera, and the casualties in the Butare Teaching Hospital. There is a lot of tension in this region between the local population and Burundi refugees who are leaving certain camps (Karama, Saga 2 to go back to Burundi. A fifteen-member MSF team is currently working here. Gitarama: the day before yesterday an MSF team was able to carry out an exploratory mission from Butare to Gitarama, a city between Butare and Kigali. In the city hospital the team came across an expatriate surgeon and three Rwandan doctors who needed supplies to tend to some 100 wounded people who had been brought from Kigali. The necessary supplies were provided today by MSF.

In London, an MSF Holland volunteer back from Rwanda told Sky News, BBC World and CNN about what he had seen. In Brussels and Nairobi, the MSF International Office asked the MSF France Communications Department about the possibility of making a declaration about Rwanda.



Message from the MSF International Communications Department to the MSF France Communications Department, 15 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

URGENT: Is MSF France going to make a statement? If so, I could do an English version with Samantha, which could once again be issued by Nairobi. A lot of the delegate offices are calling here, wanting to know if there is going to be a press release. I have told them to maintain their silence on Kigali but some of them would like to do something on the refugees in the South. What's MSF France's view on this? Samantha would also like to know if some of the recent evacuees can talk to the press about what they saw in Kigali (description of the streets, wounded, etc. No political or military angle). She would like the press to interview the Spanish doctor if possible, and maybe Wayne.

Anne-Marie [Huby, MSF United Kingdom Executive Director] is putting Vincent Van Krussse [MSF volunteer] on Sky News, BBC World Service News Hour, and World Service Television. At 20:00 CET he will go ahead with his interview on CNN from London.



'Rwanda Statement', **Message** from the MSF Holland Communications Department to the MSF France Communications Department, 18 April (in English).

Extract:

The MSF statement on Rwanda (which we discussed shortly on Friday) is something we will look at in the coming weeks, but not earlier. After some discussion this weekend, we became a bit more reluctant, because it does not seem the right moment yet. To be continued...

From 13 to 22 April 1994, Wouter van Empelen of the Emergency Cell, having been sent through Bujumbura to Butare to reorganise the MSF Holland team, noticed an increase in violence in the district, which had until then been spared.



I'd been there altogether 12 days or so. And every day, somebody left and wanted to be replaced. So, every day I had to go to the border and every day became worse and worse and worse... You would see a roadblock – some trees over the road with 15-20 men on this side and that side of the hill. And the women and the children would sit on the hill watching it all and they would not let any Tutsi escape. On the same road, it's about 50 miles from Butare to the border, there were four to five roadblocks. At the roadblocks they would kill people and at some roadblocks you would see the bodies on the side. One horrible image I still have in my mind is of people in front of their houses and along the road from Butare to the border sharpening their machetes on the concrete poles, all along the way, to make them very, very sharp.

*Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland, Emergency Cell, in Rwanda in April 1994
(in English).*

Wouter arranged for local employees of Tutsi origin, who feared for their own and their families' lives, to be evacuated to Burundi.



The day after I arrived, we had a big meeting with the staff. The Tutsi staff asked to leave the country as they were fearful for their lives. I still didn't really understand the context, of course, as I had just arrived. They were really scared for their lives, and they wanted to leave. I saw in their eyes that they were desperate. I said to them "OK, tomorrow, I am going to evacuate you." Then I had a big fight with my logistician because he didn't want to be part of that. The next day, I lined up three big Land Rovers – perhaps naively because I thought that I would manage to evacuate the local staff. I had the three cars and there were six of them because they had their husbands and their wives and all their children and all the luggage they could carry. We stuffed the three cars. On the border in the town of Butare – we didn't even leave Butare – we were stopped. One of the cars was taken away from us. All the people in that car were scared to stay in Butare. So, I said, "Look, let's get in the other cars, leave some luggage behind and get in." You never saw so many people in two MSF cars – they were almost on top of each other. So, we passed a lot of roadblocks – scary stuff. I had already radioed Bujumbura. They had sent cars to the border to pick up the passengers... So, we

arrived at the border and there were men with knives and machetes around the cars. You could not see who was in the cars because the steam from their mouths had put steam on the windows – but obviously, there were a lot of people inside. They refused to let the Rwandans cross because they had no papers, etc. I talked and talked and talked to the border guy and offered him money, but he wouldn't let them go. Earlier, in Butare, two priests who wanted to leave had joined our convoy in their own car. The priests became very handy at the border. I went to them and said, "It's your turn, please help me." The priests went to the guy and talked about Jesus and what Jesus did and asked whether he believed in Jesus and so on – he talked for 15 minutes. And the guy said, "OK, let them go." So, the priests saved their lives.

Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland, Emergency Cell, in Rwanda in April 1994
(in English).

On 16 April, MSF Belgium, MSF Holland, and CARITAS teams organised a convoy to the village of Kibeho, where they had heard there were casualties. V6 



In the valley we could see Kibeho. The church and houses were burning, and people were chasing each other, and you could hear the shots. You could see people killing each other... So, we asked each other, "What do you think? Should we go in?" I said, "Rony [Zachariah], you are the expert here, you're the doctor, what do you think?" Rony is a very courageous person and he said, "We go." He was in front, and we drove [behind], but there was a big truck of people coming towards us – Hutu of course – now I know, but at that time it was just Rwandans because there had been no discussion yet about genocide, or Hutu/Tutsi – it was Hutu/Tutsi a little bit, but it was not really obvious. They stopped us, all those guys with machetes. There was one guy with a machine gun. They surrounded the car. They wanted to drag us out. They wanted papers, so we showed them the papers. I remember one guy took the passport of Marie Paule and threw it on the floor and Marie Paule got out of the car to pick it up and they dragged her [aside]. The guy with the machine gun was pointing his gun at Rony's car and then he put it down again. He was not sure what to do. We were white and – it was a very dangerous situation. And there was a very fat guy, he came to me – I don't speak French – he spoke French to me, and I don't know how I understood but I did – he said to me, "If you turn around now, I will keep them off and you will get away. If you want to continue, you're dead meat" ... The road was not wide, so it took a while to turn the cars around, but he [fat guy] pushed everyone back to the truck. The man with the machine gun was obviously the most dangerous so he held him back. We turned around and drove 50 metres and there was a roadblock. Four jeeps with military, Rwandese military. The commander was in front so we could not go back. From where we were stuck you could not see the pickup with the people. So, the commander came out and asked us what was going on and we said, "Everything is burning. There is a pickup truck with a whole lot of vicious people with knives and a guy with a machine gun. What are you going to do?" He said that they were sent here to stabilise [the situation]. Rony told me later that they may have gone in to assist with the killing. I really don't know. Anyway, they took away their jeeps and we returned.

Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland Emergency Cell, in Rwanda in April 1994 (in English).



Much later that evening we got back to Butare after conducting an inquiry on the Kibeho road on the outskirts of the town. We collated the information received from the displaced and the Zaireans (some of whom said they had seen our vehicles) who had fled Kibeho. They told us that some 2,000 civilian Tutsi had been lined up along with the wounded in the church in Kibeho and mown down by the Interahamwe and the soldiers. This was confirmed to us by other displaced people in the same area. At a meeting on 17 April, the 'Sous-Prefect' [local administrator] of Butare confirmed that many people had been killed in Kibeho. He said, "It was dreadful."

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).

At Butare hospital, the MSF team was tending to the many wounded. When driving around the district, MSF volunteers witnessed violent scenes and the exodus of thousands of Tutsis towards Burundi. The wounded were treated in a surgical outpost set up by MSF in Kayanza. [V7](#)



'Violence in Rwanda: hundreds of injured manage to reach Burundi', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 20 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

According to the MSF team in Butare, the massacres are continuing unabated in the region bordering Butare. Dozens of people with machete wounds, and bullet and grenade injuries, arrived in the last few hours at the city's central hospital where an MSF team is operating. Accounts from the wounded indicate that people trying to flee the inter-ethnic massacres over the last few days by congregating in churches and schools have been systematically eliminated. Thousands of people are on the roads seeking refuge. Those trying to escape are killed on the spot at the roadblocks set up by the militia. Our teams have seen dozens of bodies at these roadblocks. At the border post between Rwanda and Burundi, on the Butare-Bujumbura Road, refugees were killed on the Rwandan side. Nevertheless, hundreds of wounded Rwandans have managed to cross the border and Médecins Sans Frontières has set up an emergency surgical outpost in Kayanza, in the north of Burundi.



I stopped and there was a guard and a soldier with a big stick who was killing a civilian by crushing his head. The civilian was crying and I could not drive through because there was the roadblock. There was a guy with a gun who was saying, "Gita, gita." I said, "Take away this roadblock." You cannot imagine the terrible noise that it creates in your head – the scene in your head when someone is killed and it's so nearby and there is a gun here and you can do nothing. I was never in my life, so – like my head exploded. There was this explosion in my head, and I could do nothing – it was the most terrible thing I have ever [seen]... He was screaming because he could not speak anymore and you could hear the crack, crack – it was really horrible. And the guy said, "Go! Leave, leave, leave." But I couldn't because there was this roadblock – and I don't speak French. Now I understand that he was saying "leave".

Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland, Emergency Cell, in Rwanda in April 1994 (in English).

On 22 April 1994, the United Nations Security Council voted to drastically reduce the number of peacekeepers in Rwanda. In a press release, MSF France and MSF Holland described the retreat as a sign of abandoning the Rwandan people.



'While the United Nations pull out of the country, the Rwandan people risk being forgotten', MSF France–MSF Holland **Press release**, 22 April 1994 (in French, in Dutch).

Extract:

While the massacres continue in Rwanda and the country becomes a new black spot, Médecins Sans Frontières is concerned about how little the international community is doing. The retreat of the United Nations' peacekeepers is a sign of them abandoning the Rwandan people.

Médecins Sans Frontières is launching an appeal to the international community to mobilise all possible means to ensure the belligerents respect the civilian population, teams, and health care facilities, as well as to obtain real access to victims. The need is already considerable but could become even greater in the days to come, both in terms of caring for the wounded, and aid for the displaced people and refugees.

The fighting is leading the population to move about within the country, but it remains difficult to estimate how many. Médecins Sans Frontières is worried about the fate of the 400,000 displaced people and the 270,000 Burundian refugees in Rwanda who were totally dependent on international aid before the war and now have no access to assistance. Thousands of Rwandans are beginning to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. 8,000 Rwandan refugees have arrived in Tanzania, 5,000 in Zaire and 4,000 in Uganda. Médecins Sans Frontières, which is present at all these sites, is requesting the application of the right of asylum. It should not be forgotten that, only a few months ago, 12,000 Burundian refugees died in Rwanda and 10,000 in Tanzania, largely due to the slow and inadequate amount of international aid deployed.

Médecins Sans Frontières has medico-surgical teams in Kigali and Butare in Rwanda and is helping refugees and those forced back in Burundi (Kirundo, Ngozi and Kayanza), in Zaire, Tanzania and in Uganda.

The same day, the MSF Belgium team tried to get to Saga 1 and Saga 2 refugee camps because they had been warned of massacres taking place there.



We didn't have any drivers because most of our drivers were Tutsi, so we went to drive ourselves. Normally the road between Butare and Saga 1 and 2 takes 20 minutes. This time it took three hours because there were barricades all the way. They were checking the cars and trying to prevent us from reaching Saga 1 and 2. The place was being cordoned off and something was happening inside. That was the immediate impression we got. We managed to negotiate our way through the checkpoints. When we were about two kilometres from the MSF houses, we saw in the distance that they were burning. They were next to the camps. And then we had this crowd of people that came charging towards us. They were with machetes. Some were wearing African masks and grass on their heads. They were chanting and whistling, and some were wearing yellow scarves, which apparently distinguished them as Interahamwe. They came towards our cars. With a baton they smashed the front windshield and the headlights and started hitting the car very hard. It was very shocking, and we really

thought we were going to be killed. And then everything stopped. Someone came up. He looked like he was responsible for the crowd and, speaking fluent French, asked "what do you want?". I told him "The security situation is very bad. I have counted my people. I have about 25 MSF people over there and I prefer to take them back". He looked at me very firmly and said, "if you are here to take out Tutsi, we are going to kill them all anyway and we are going to kill you too". So, we were forced to turn back, we had no option, we went back to Butare. It was a very difficult evening for the team because we had 30 of our team from Zaire, Tutsi, and Hutu, in these camps. The evening of the next day we got information from our Zairean personnel that managed to escape or were released. They told us what happened. The two MSF houses were surrounded, and all the MSF staff was forcibly taken out. They checked the ID cards. The MSF Tutsi were put on one side, the MSF Hutu were put on one side, and the Zairean people were put on one side. The Interahamwe gave machetes and guns to the MSF Hutu staff and asked them to kill their Tutsi colleagues.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, , April 1994 (in English).

On 22 and 23 April, 150 Butare hospital patients and five local staff were murdered in front of the MSF team. [V8](#)



150 of our hospital patients, women, children, and adults were killed. They were selectively taken out and hacked to death in front of our own eyes. That was 22 and 23 April 1994. What was most striking for us was that five of our house personnel were also killed. There was Sabine, Nadine, Rose, Jean-Marie, and one other of our nurses. But Sabine was a close friend of the team. She was the elder nurse; she was seven months pregnant. Everyone [else] was Tutsi. I knew what was happening. But when they came to take Sabine I intervened physically. Sabine was working with a nurse who was attempting to suture a patient outside because we had tens of Tutsi patients in the hospital who were trying to use it as a refuge place. So, they [soldiers] pulled the patient off the table. Of course, the sutures were bleeding all over. Soldiers took the patient, they went behind [the hospital] and hacked him to death. Then they came to take Sabine and I intervened physically and said: "Leave Sabine alone. Sabine has nothing to do with all this. Sabine has been working for you, the soldiers." We had 140 Hutu soldiers because the RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Forces] had advanced and they were starting to use Butare hospital as a military base. We had negotiated with them, we had said, "We will treat everybody under the condition that you will accept everybody. The hospital is a neutral territory: Tutsi, Hutu, soldiers, whoever. Here there should be access to treatment for everybody. Then we will continue." I was hoping they would understand that. Sabine had been working for them, [attending to] their problems, their wounds, everything. I said: "Sabine has been working for you for this time and besides she is a Hutu, she has nothing to do with this." The captain who was responsible for the different teams looked at me very carefully and then he opened his pocket and took out a piece of paper and on this piece of paper there was a list of names, typed. And Sabine's name was on it. He looked at the paper and he looked at me and said, "Yes, you are right. Sabine is a Hutu. But her husband is a Tutsi. And his baby is going to be a Tutsi". I suddenly realised the cruel reality that in Rwanda the baby follows the paternal line. So Sabine was killed and so was the baby.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).

Bruno Corbé from the MSF Brussels headquarters arrived in Butare. He advised the team to leave.



The team's spirit was very strong. We were trying to do something. Then they sent Bruno Corbé from headquarters because we had lost communication and he came and said, "You have stayed too long here, you should leave. Your lives are at risk." That was the same day they killed all our patients in our hospital. So, I said, "Now we are pulling out." I told them that we were pulling out because we did not see any neutrality, any form of respect.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).

On 24 April 1994, the last MSF expatriate volunteers left Butare for Burundi. From a bridge they saw corpses floating on the Akagera River.



We were counting five bodies every minute on the Akagera River. People had been selectively brought [to the bridge], their ID cards were checked and then they were massacred. Interahamwe would collect all the people from villages to bring them together and then they would massacre them. They would hack them to death. If you paid 30 US cents, you could have a bullet. We saw this. The whole landscape was like this... The day we stood on that bridge between Burundi and Rwanda watching those bodies going by, I swore that if there is a judicial system in this world, one day these people would pay for their crimes.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).

Once they arrived in the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, members of the MSF Butare team talked to journalists.



The press people knew about us because they interviewed us when we were in Butare, a week before, by telephone. As soon as we came, they found us. We told them that there was anarchy, that people were being killed, that we had 100 of our patients killed, and that our MSF staff were beaten to death in front of our eyes. It was the beginning. People knew that we had some testimony. The idea at this time was to ask for safe havens and for an international intervention – to call for an area where Tutsi could evacuate. That was what we said to the press.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).



'Slaughter at hospital – in Rwanda – Gunmen slay 170 in unremitting chaos', **Newsday/Reuters** (UK) 25 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Doctor Rony Zacharias of the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) said the killings took place over three days at the central hospital in the southern city of Butare, 25 miles from the border with Burundi. "We saw the bodies of two Rwandese MSF drivers who were killed and a nurse who was beaten to death... Everything is out of control in Rwanda. It is a complete state of anarchy," he said by phone from the Burundian capital of Bujumbura. "The killings at the hospital took place over the past three days... carried out by people in military uniform and armed civilians." Other members of his team corroborated Zacharias' account of what he described as a systematic "ethnic cleansing" of Tutsi civilians, apparently by members of Rwanda's Hutu majority. Zacharias said that on the road to the border with Burundi after leaving Butare yesterday, "The whole landscape was littered with bodies," and in the space of five minutes he counted 30 corpses of men, women and children floating down the river on the border. He urged the international community, especially the United Nations, to provide a minimum level of security so international aid agencies could operate in the chaotic central African country.



'170 slain in Rwandan hospital', **The New York Times** (USA), 25 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Doctors with the international relief group Doctors Without Borders reported that about 170 patients and staff members had been killed in a hospital in Butare. "This has been the most vicious single incident in this current wave of violence," said Anne-Marie Huby, a spokeswoman for the organization in London. "It was a direct attack on civilians in what is usually a neutral place." She said the group was pulling its staff out of southern Rwanda.

On 24 April 1994, back in Amsterdam, Wouter van Empelen told the press what he saw.



'Massacres in Rwanda', MSF Holland **Press release**, 24 April 1994 (in English and in Dutch).

Extract:

In the south Rwandese town of Butare an orgy of violence is taking place. Thousands of people have been arrested and taken away to the outskirts of the town where they have been killed. In the university hospital where Médecins Sans Frontières is working, 170 male patients were rounded up by military and taken away. MSF is extremely concerned for their safety. The patients were Tutsis and Hutus.

As the civil authorities have lost total control over the situation and as the military obstruct the treatment of civil patients, Médecins Sans Frontières has to put off its activities.

According to the civil authorities in Butare there are 2 million displaced people in the south of Rwanda from the north and east of the country. These people are in need of immediate help and food. A serious famine is feared. MSF teams state that hundreds of people have been massacred near the border with Burundi. In the river between Rwanda and Burundi, as well as along the road between Butare and the Burundese capital Bujumbura, they saw corpses.

Médecins Sans Frontières protested a few days ago against the nearly complete withdrawal of UN troops from Rwanda. The organisation has asked the Security Council again to reconsider its decision.



I went back and the PR department had already lined up a lot of interviews so the whole next day I was on the morning news and then the whole day, there were interviews, debriefings... I think that by that time, MSF had already declared a genocide – the official word was genocide. Jules Pieters, my boss, had lined up a meeting with Foreign Affairs in The Hague and I told them my story. What we saw, what we did, what we could do and how we thought it would go, etc. And I must tell you, I was very happy to be released.

Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland, Emergency Cell, in Rwanda in April 1994 (in English).

In Brussels, on 28 April 1994, the MSF Belgium team from Butare gave a press conference with the Executive Director and President of MSF Belgium board of directors.



Invitation to MSF Belgium **Press conference** 'Back from Butare (south Rwanda) the MSF team tells of the daily horror' (in French).

Extract:

- Manhunt on the border
- Massacre of hospital patients
- Despair and resignation of the victims
- Massacre of local MSF staff, etc.



'MSF calls for stronger United Nations presence in violence-stricken Rwanda', **Press release**, MSF United Kingdom, 28 April 1994 (in English).

Extract:

At a press conference in Brussels this afternoon Doctor Rony Zachariah of Médecins Sans Frontières will call for more robust United Nations engagement in Rwanda, in order to protect civilians and enable aid organisations to resume their work.

Doctor Zachariah, who was evacuated last Sunday from the town of Butare in the south of Rwanda after 170 of his patients were surrounded and murdered by the army at the teaching hospital, will tell how essential humanitarian aid is being blocked because of the inter-ethnic violence which continues to claim lives every day. MSF saw the systematic massacre of innocent civilians of all ages, sometimes on mere suspicion of their ethnic

origin. "These massacres are so widespread and systematic that they are close to genocide", declared Doctor Zachariah.

MSF will press the United Nations to establish protected zones for civilians, as this is the only measure likely to halt the massacres, and to authorise the deployment of humanitarian aid.



'Genocide in progress in Rwanda: 200,000 dead, says MSF Belgium', **AFP** (France), 28 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

A veritable genocide is underway Rwanda, where the inter-ethnic fighting has claimed at least 200,000 lives, claimed the humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Brussels on Thursday... "There are nearly two million displaced people in the south of the country, according to the local authorities, and at least 200,000 people have been massacred across the country," said Indian national Doctor Rony Zachariah in Brussels. Until Sunday Dr Zachariah had been leading a five-member MSF team in Butare, in the south of Rwanda. "Within the space of ten minutes I saw about thirty corpses carried along by the river from the bridge which separates the border with Burundi", he added. "A humanitarian disaster is looming before our very eyes and there are just as many victims to come if nothing is done for Rwanda," said Doctor George Dallemagne, Director of Operations, MSF Belgium.



'Rwanda: MSF confirms genocide is underway', **La Wallonie** (Belgium), 29 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

"A veritable genocide is underway in Rwanda. We are disappointed and shocked by the UN Security Council decision to withdraw the UNAMIR mission. The international community cannot close its eyes to the massacres," declared Mr George Dallemagne, MSF Belgium Director of Operations at a press conference in Brussels on Thursday. "We contacted the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr Dehaene, King Albert II, the Belgian and New Zealand ambassadors to the UN (the latter currently chairs the Security Council) to try to establish protected zones where casualties would at least be respected, and to open humanitarian corridors," added Mr Dallemagne. An MSF team still working in Butare Teaching Hospital last Sunday, the day after soldiers had massacred 170 civilians, explained that these civilians had disappeared in small groups into the woods below the hospital. "Later we saw trucks coming to load bodies from the hillocks and get them out," added a nurse. According to the MSF team, the trouble started in Butare "when the presidential guard arrived from Gitarama. Wounded soldiers started to take civilians, claiming they were 'spies of the RPF'. Anyone wearing shirt and trousers was regarded as rich and consequently in the pay of the RPF and taken away," said a nurse. "First it was the men's turn, then young men, and finally everyone," she added. Local MSF workers (Zairean, Rwandans and Burundis) were targeted. The Zaireans were released, but the Hutu and Tutsi were kept back and sorted again. "Then the soldiers forced the Hutu prisoners to prove that they were good Hutu by killing the Tutsi, or be immediately cut down themselves," she continued. The MSF team also confirmed the palpable anti-Belgian feeling "at every checkpoint" as far as the last checkpoint before the Burundi border. "The United Nations did nothing to avoid the bloodbath in Butare. It is inconceivable that we can just stand by and let people be massacred. We understand

the difficulties facing the United Nations, but we also must be aware of the problems facing people on the ground. If the UN can't help them, who can?" concluded Mr Dallemagne.



When we returned to Brussels we were debriefed and there were a lot of press people. We held a press conference with all the press in Brussels and with Reginald Moreels and Georges Dallemagne. It is possible that it was the first time they pronounced the word 'genocide'. I can't really remember if I said "it is a genocide" when I was in Bujumbura.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).

That evening, in an article published by the Flemish language daily, *De Morgen*, and reprinted on 6 May in the French language daily *Le Soir*, Reginald Moreels, President of MSF Belgium Board, labelled the Rwanda crisis 'genocide'.



'Opinion on the crisis in Rwanda' Dr Reginald Moreels on behalf of Médecins Sans Frontières, *Le Soir* (Belgium), 6 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The crisis in Rwanda is no longer just a crisis: it is genocide. Civil society has been decapitated, both figuratively and literally. Many associates, missionaries and NGO grassroots workers have left the country in a climate of nostalgia, sadness and even revulsion. Nostalgia for their huge investment, sadness for the skilled colleagues they were forced to leave there, and revulsion because in abandoning their Rwandan colleagues they were signing their death warrant. Ten Belgian Peacekeepers have lost their lives and we weep with their families, because their mandate was a farce. Many Belgian paratroopers, who evacuated their compatriots and foreigners with courage and professionalism, came home demoralised because they had been unable to use stronger tactics against the bands of extremist Hutu and a presidential guard on the rampage. Is it not intolerable to let an assassin kill somebody without being able to react? Not only does such an attitude condone the massacres, it is also soul-destroying for soldiers and humanitarian workers alike. Today it is not acceptable that great powers, i.e. the most powerful members of the Security Council and the United Nations, can wage war with sophisticated weapons in the Gulf, yet not be able or sufficiently determined to neutralise machetes and relatively lightweight firearms. While we still meditate – rightly – on the Holocaust of the Second World War, and revisit with a little concern and shame the genocide (discovered 'on the late side') perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, we can now witness a genocide unfolding on our TV screens, yet the international community cannot even put Rwanda on the Security Council agenda! Belgium remains the only country (with the Netherlands) that is trying, even though its colonial past and sensitive diplomatic relations prevent it from providing the means to intervene. This impotence, which we dare to describe as 'guilty distraction', is incomprehensible and unacceptable at a time of false triumphalism in human rights. The obligation to intervene, which we endorse if it is applied non-selectively and is ethically sound, has failed. Even more so, the right to humanitarian intervention, which was its corollary, will have taken a step backwards as long as the international authorities, the UN, and its wealthy Member States, have not realised that a man's value does not depend on his racial or ethnic origin, his political or

religious convictions, or his economic and social clout. As long as the international community – which is only too aware of the situation but does not dare to draw the logical conclusions – does not take account of the way internal conflicts are developing, i.e. of the growing chaos of political contexts, there will be no criminalisation of combatants who no longer respect the rules of war, who take humanitarian organisations hostage and shoot at them.

If a national authority is seriously failing, or even flagging to the point where it cannot guarantee the freedom of its citizens, the international community has a duty to take on this task. This is the definition of ‘humanitarian intervention’ which gives “a State or a group of States, the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of a third State, if this latter shows contempt for civil rights or oppresses them unjustly and cruelly”. The last century saw several interventions of this kind in Greece, the Lebanon and Turkey, but they multiplied after the Second World War, with the establishment of the UN, and have dramatically increased since the end of the Cold War. Korea, the Congo, Somalia and, to a great extent, Bosnia, are countries where intervention was not restricted to peacekeeping operations, and a return to peace was engineered rather more forcefully. The fundamental role of the UN peacekeeping force remains to restore peace, to protect victims and, as a third priority, to enhance the ability of international private organisations to provide emergency aid and guarantee their protection. In Rwanda, there is absolutely no question of arguing for a reduced presence of the UN peacekeeping force while the carnage continues. That is why, before the whole country and perhaps even its neighbours give off an unbearable stench of corpses for decades, we at MSF – together with our sister organisations in the neighbouring countries – have called on the highest political authorities to establish security zones, starting with the larger medical facilities in towns like Kigali, Butare, Gisengi, etc. The wounded and the refugees could take refuge there whatever their ethnic origin. When we must admit in rage and disgust that civilian patients are being killed in their beds, as is the case in Butare and Kigali, thereby making a slaughterhouse of a hospital, a place that was respected even in Somalia and Bosnia (with a few exceptions such as Gorazde), we find ourselves back in the Middle Ages. If we fail to act, humanitarian principles and the Geneva Convention that underpins them, will have taken a step backwards. Violence and aggression will have struck a decisive blow. The failure of the international community to act can be compared to the offence of ‘failure to assist a person in danger’. It needs to be said loud and clear, any political strategy – regardless of any theoretical discussion of the political context and history of a conflict – must choose between two courses. Either it chooses the path of human rights where, according to realistic political and economic criteria, everything possible is done to avoid enormous, serious human rights violations (conflict prevention), to alleviate them or neutralise them (conflict management). Or it chooses the selfish path of nationalism, which continues to base international relations on Realpolitik, in the guise of national sovereignty. We are not so naïve as to think we can switch seamlessly from one path to another. But if we let genocide take place in Rwanda, we will unfortunately have to admit with shame over the next few days and weeks that even Realpolitik has shed its – albeit small – remaining scruples.

On 29 April 1994, 170,000 Rwandan Hutus, fleeing the advancing RPF forces, but also influenced by their leaders’ propaganda, crossed the border with Tanzania and settled around 10 kilometres from the Benaco site. From early May, MSF France, MSF Spain, and MSF Holland, who have been in Tanzania with Burundian refugees since 1993, provided the Rwandan refugees with medical and health care.

The refugees were under the tight control of their leaders.

 *The whole approach to the aid programme in these camps was based on the bad experience that we had with the Burundian refugees the previous year in both Tanzania and Rwanda. The aid system did not function well – there were breaks in the food pipeline which caused terrible malnutrition. Our entire operational approach from the outset aimed to maximise assistance to the Burundian and Rwandan refugees, a systematic distribution to all children less than five years old to prevent malnutrition. In Benaco we were reacting to the previous crisis... I was already working for MSF in Tanzania when the refugees arrived in Benaco at the end of April '94. We got on a plane and went up there on the second day. We saw them arrive and we witnessed the entire set-up of the initial mission... It was the first time that I had ever seen such a large influx of refugees. I had never seen so many people, or such a big emergency. We just dived head-first into it all. For sure, there were problems in Rwanda. I had understood the exodus, I could see that the refugees were organised, but I didn't realize that they were killers. I shook hands with the mayor of Rustom, a notorious killer, and with other people. Of course, I could tell they were organised. It was obvious. They grouped themselves in communes. In a camp of 150,000 people, the Tanzanian Red Cross and the Rwandan Red Cross food distribution took place without so much as a fight. A week and a half after their arrival, we put together a measles vaccination campaign with a coverage rate of 90%. The level of organisation and the amount of people mobilised was incredible.*

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 (in French).

At the end of April/beginning of May 1994, MSF representations were made to the United Nations and the US government.

 *The Executive Director of MSF Belgium came to New York. We made several different appointments, of which the most interesting and significant was the one with the then President of the Security Council, the New Zealand representative. Jean-Pierre told him about the massacre in Butare, and said that it really was genocide, that the soldiers were dragging people from their beds and shooting them. The President was genuinely shocked and said: "I am going to call an immediate meeting of the Security Council. I will tell them about your visit." The next morning, we met the Belgian ambassador. At the time, Belgium was a member of the Security Council. He spoke somewhat strangely, saying, "Your presentation was a knock-out!" That wasn't really what we were expecting him to say about genocide! But he said, "It was incredible", there was a silence after the Council President submitted his report, as if an angel had passed, and then everyone jumped on the Rwandan ambassador: "What have you got to say to that? How do you answer these charges? To the fact that soldiers wearing your uniform are doing this?" This was our first official move at high level.*

Catherine Harper, MSF UN liaison officer, NYC (in French).

On 30 April and 1 May 1994, the General Assembly of the French section of MSF focused on the election of a new president.



Annual report May 1993-April 1994, Rony Brauman, MSF France Board of Director's President, May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Dear friends,

This report was very difficult to draft, partly for personal reasons, because it is now time to move on, which is very emotional... but also because we have had urgent requests from people on the ground, especially in Rwanda and Gorazde, where I have had to work intensively over the last few weeks... The tales from Rwanda strangely echo those from an earlier conflict in the former Yugoslavia, i.e. two and a half years ago. We are hearing of inter-ethnic conflict and deep-seated ancestral hatred that makes enemy tribes set on each other and cut each other's throats. In fact, we are almost guilty of revisionism when we say that, because these are no less than pogroms on an industrial, mechanical scale, carried out with grenades and machetes, programmed, and implemented by well-identified groups. I would add that France also has its share of responsibility, since we French citizens – so keen on human rights and humanitarian aid – helped to arm these militia... the MSF Belgium teams, unarmed and helpless in the face of such massacre, unable to do anything to prevent it, decided – I believe rightly – to withdraw and broadcast the situation as much as possible. To our great sorrow we were unable to join them since we were working under the umbrella of the ICRC. Having decided, for the moment, to stay on, we must remain relatively discreet for the moment. The outburst of violence in the country is undoubtedly one of the most terrifying that MSF teams have seen at first hand in all MSF's long history of gruesome experiences.



It wasn't easy to see exactly what was happening, especially since we had other concerns. For example, at the MSF France General Assembly, which was held when the genocide was going on, the situation in Rwanda was not debated.

Dr Bernard Pécoul, MSF France General Director (in French).

On 4 May 1994, MSF told the press that it had trebled its manpower in Tanzania, Burundi, and Zaire to help with the 489,000 Rwandans who had fled their country.



'Médecins Sans Frontières sends special plane to Tanzania to provide emergency relief to Rwandan refugees', MSF France **Press release**, 4 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The plane will take off for Mwanza (Tanzania) tomorrow evening from Bordeaux airport, carrying a medical-logistics team of 10 people and 40 tonnes of supplies for the emergency relief of the refugee population... MSF already has a team of 12 people in Benaco. In the emergency phase, the team is building a dispensary and arranging for a water supply to the site, as water is scarce there. MSF will then have responsibility for a sector comprising 60,000 to 100,000 refugees.

At the beginning of May 1994, MSF deployed new teams in the north of Rwanda and launched exploratory missions in Gisenyi and the Bugesera region south of Kigali.



MSF Situation Report Rwanda No. 15 - MSF France, 4 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Today the exploratory mission for Bugesera is leaving Bujumbura for Kirundo, where it will meet up with an MSF Holland team. Mickey is setting up in Byumba (PSF [Pharmaciens Sans Frontières] and MDM are there, near Rwamagana) and the MSF Holland exploratory mission (with the ICRC) is moving on towards Gisenyi and Ruhengeri.



MSF Situation Report Rwanda No. 16 – MSF France, 13 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

MSF Holland is working in Gatere from Uganda. They say there are 80,000 people in the area (including 50,000 displaced). The focus will be on providing support for consultation facilities, and a food programme will be launched. The teams are working with an RPF escort. The exploratory mission from Goma (+ ICRC) is still impossible. In the southwest, the MSF France and MSF Holland exploratory missions have not managed to penetrate deep into the country.

From 2 to 7 May 1994, the coordinators' week, followed by the MSF Belgium General Assembly, was an emotional time. The genocide in Rwanda was at the heart of the debate.



Report on the situation in Rwanda, MSF Belgium Coordinators' Week 2-7 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Report:

- Impotence of MSF. Situation out of control; no longer possible to protect the wounded and national staff.
- Feeling of guilt
- Complete lack of defence of human rights
- Upper limit reached, with associated risks
- Widespread anti-Belgian feeling
- Poor international coordination
- Debate:
 - MSF facing failure: 100,000 to 200,000 victims, including our national staff
 - State of shock; suspension of Rwanda-Burundi activities for a few days
 - Review MSF 'mandate'; there are limits
 - Diplomatic lobbying needs to continue, but needs extending to civil society, and on an individual basis. Important role for the Communications Department
 - Avoid media pressure from HQ on MSF sections on the ground

- Challenge African leaders on their failure to act
- Moral support for our local staff: review their status
- Must not separate Rwanda from Burundi when analysing this context.

Conclusions:

- Continue lobbying work
- Innovate. Find other ways of alerting and informing public opinion.
- Continue internal debate and joint debate with other organisations
- Relaunch action for Rwandan refugees in neighbouring countries
- Do not leave Rwanda (cf. redistribution between MSF sections)



MSF Belgium annual **report** 1993-1994, by Reginald Moreels, President of MSF Belgium board of directors (in French), 8 May 1994.

Extract:

Alas, the recent massacres in Rwanda signal the end of a truly short-lived era in which the right to intervene was seen as a new right to save human lives, regardless of the nature of the conflict or the players involved. Thousands of Rwandans were left without protection or assistance; their only 'right' was to be massacred before the eyes of the international community. Given the lack of any rapid decision-making on the part of the Security Council (or should I say "given the lack of interest for this small, resourceless and overcolonised central African country") the notion of humanitarian intervention has taken a dreadful blow, which is likely to have long-term repercussions for the 'triumphant entry' of humanitarian principles in international relations. Belgian paratroopers managed to evacuate foreign nationals smoothly and efficiently. But the stamp on the left hand of those evacuated from Kigali reminded some of us of the numbers tattooed on the arms of concentration camp prisoners. For the first group, the stamp was a passport to life, for the second, a passport to death. So many soldiers, whatever their origin, must have felt guilty, or worse, been invaded by a silent shame at having seen, just a few metres away, their unarmed comrades being massacred along with thousands of helpless Rwandans fleeing the atrocities, without being able to attack the assassins.



I will never forget the moment when Reginald took the floor and couldn't string two words together. He started crying and said: "I can't... what I've seen is beyond telling. I have no activity report to give today." Then he pulled himself together and finally read his report. But he remained in tears for a while. And then Reginald wrote a paper that used the term 'genocide'. I did not think that the argument was very good, but he had sensed it. And in this business, it is necessary that, at a certain moment, people sense things. Afterwards it is important that the point is articulated, but first we need people who sense it.

Dr Bernard Pécoul, MSF France General Director (in French).

In a letter to the editor of *The Guardian* on 9 May 1994, the London MSF office rejected the connection the newspaper had made in its 7 May 1994 edition between MSF and the 'right to intervene'. MSF reaffirmed its concern to see military action guided by clear political objectives, with aid organisations assisting with humanitarian action.



Letter to the editor of *The Guardian* (UK), Anne-Marie Huby, Director of Médecins Sans Frontières, United Kingdom, 9 May 1994 (in English).

Extract:

In his article on the political problems of delivering humanitarian aid in the war zone ('When food relief comes out of the barrel of a gun,' *The Guardian* 7 May), David Pallister wrongly associated the aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) with the campaign of the former French minister for humanitarian affairs, Bernard Kouchner, for an internationally recognised 'right to intervene' on humanitarian grounds. Ever since the 'right to intervene' slogan was first heard at the United Nations at the time of the Kurdish exodus in 1991, MSF has challenged 'government humanitarianism' as a contradiction in terms. By definition, governments are driven not by purely humanitarian motives, but by the pursuit of their own interests; international inaction over strategically unimportant Rwanda is a case in point.

More importantly, governments' involvement in humanitarian aid has proved a useful foreign policy instrument when careful inaction is the order of the day. This humanitarian-only approach has had the most devastating effect in the former Yugoslavia, where independent agencies such as Médecins Sans Frontières find it more difficult than ever to conduct humanitarian operations 'for free' as the UN and governments barter aid against promises of political favours.

What humanitarian aid agencies expect of future UN interventions in places of turmoil is less humanitarian talk – as troops feel uneasy in the sheep's clothing of humanitarian aid – and more political resolve. In other words, assigning clear political objectives to military action and leaving the aid agencies to what they do best – humanitarian aid.

On 11 May 1994, MSF Belgium informed the press of its activities in Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire.



'Rwanda Emergency: MSF continues its work', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 11 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

It is extremely difficult to intervene in Rwanda. Just under a month ago 126 expatriate MSF workers were there. The teams are now down to 11 people. This drastic reduction in the number of doctors and nurses present in Rwandan territory reflects the huge difficulty humanitarian organisations have in coming to the aid of the civilian population in this country. Now 2 MSF members are working with the ICRC team in a field hospital in Kigali... 7 MSF members are in Byumba, in the north of Rwanda, where a surgical team is at work at the hospital. MSF is also treating 16,000 displaced people in the area. In addition, 2 other MSF members are working south of Gitare, close to the Ugandan border (in collaboration with the ICRC).

Tanzania: 200,000 Rwandan refugees in the largest refugee camp in the world. Forty MSF volunteers are currently at work in the Benaco camp, near Ngara some 6 kilometres from the Rwandan border... a team of 5 is working in the Murungu camp some 30 km from the border where 16,000 Rwandan refugees have assembled.

Burundi: 24 MSF workers are providing medical assistance and help with food and sanitation in the Kirundo region. There are 10 others in the province of Ngozi and 10 in the province of Kayanza.

Zaire: 30,000 people have taken refuge in Zaire. A team of 10 expatriate MSF staff works in Goma and Uvira.

The two MSF nurses working under the ICRC flag in the field hospital in Kigali told the Paris team of their powerlessness.

 *More and more casualties were arriving and, since the patients who had recovered were not able to leave, we had to keep them. Tension was mounting among the local staff. Some employees left us. They came to tell us frankly: "I am all alone, I've lost all my family, it's all going to end badly; there are meetings in the hospital, lists going round, I don't feel safe, so I'd rather leave." The ICRC had tried to talk them out of it, saying that it was the same everywhere and that even they were not able to guarantee their safety or a convoy, that they would have to set off into the wild without knowing what was going to happen to them. But they were perfectly aware of the fact that, in any event, they were all alone with their fear... We learned, a little late in the day, that meetings were being held in the hospital at night and that lists were being circulated and leaving the hospital; lists of names showing who was Tutsi and who was Hutu. I think there were some informers among the local staff. That's what I felt most. The employees told us about it but we couldn't check it out. We tried doing the rounds at night to see who was meeting and where, and what was being said, but we were tired. We told Philippe, the head of the ICRC delegation, but we couldn't do anything else.*

*Monique Doux, MSF France/ICRC team in Kigali, Anaesthetic Nurse,
3 May to 13 June 1994 (in French).*

At MSF France HQ, a discussion was started about the need to label the massacres 'genocide.'

 *We were a bit allergic to the word 'genocide'. The last time we'd used it was in connection with the Kurds [in 1991] when Marcel Roux had come back with Nicolas de Metz. He was debriefed here and said: "It's genocide." And, of course, Rony and others here gave him a lecture, saying, "No, you don't just talk about genocide like that. It's not credible. Genocide means something extremely specific." We were reluctant to use the word. The Belgians were the first to talk about it. Then, soon afterwards, in Paris we started to get our heads around it. We began to see clearly that there was a deliberate operation to exterminate the Tutsi as such. This corresponded exactly with the definition of genocide. It was premeditated: there were lists, distribution of weapons, watchwords, and epithets such as 'cockroaches'. We could see it; we could hear it being said on the ground. We started to contact researchers, to read the works of Jean-Pierre Chrétien, Filip Reyntjens, Jean-François Bayart, etc. Then it got out and the press started to talk about it. They took their time, but they did talk about it. I tried to decide whether, with what we were seeing on the ground, in addition to the massacre we could see all around us, we could say that we were witnessing genocide... Our volunteers were prisoners in the ICRC hospital and the rare sorties they made were to recover the survivors of the massacres. Most of the hospital patients were Hutu who had been wounded in the RPF offensive. We could see there were more Tutsi, but we didn't really understand why. Stories*

started to break, such as the massacre at the Church of the Holy Family. People spoke on the radio. ICRC teams brought food to a camp for displaced Tutsi, but it was, in fact, a regrouping camp. Every day they realised there were purges, lists. People were taken away and then found dead. We started to see that the country was gradually siding with this new order in which Tutsi were driven out and Hutu took over from them.

*Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France Board of Director's President, from May 1994
(in French).*



We couldn't all agree on a description of what was really happening in Rwanda. We knew that there was a 'humanitarian catastrophe', to use the official terminology. We could see what was happening, but to say that this is genocide... We all agreed to refer to the role of France and of the international community in terms of what they weren't doing. But it seems to me, to go on from there and say it was genocide... apart from the Belgians who said it, but without thinking too much about it... it was more an emotional reaction than a political description. Let's face it, we were even wondering about it ourselves. The discussion wasn't consistent. I had discussed it with François Jean, Rony Brauman and Bernard Pécoul, without even thinking about the legal implications of using the word 'genocide'. Then Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier (the Legal Advisor) brought it up.

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department
(in French).*

In May 1994, it became essential for MSF to make a public statement.



When I got back from Rwanda (at the beginning of May) I tried to get things moving at MSF, and MSF tried to get things moving in the outside world. But even when you have something to say, you still need to find a means to express it. A press release is all well and good, but it doesn't stop there.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager in French).



When Jean-Hervé was over there, I think we had already started to speak out; I don't remember where exactly. We started to speak out, to escape from the ICRC banner. When Jean-Hervé came back, we said, "MSF can't go on in this forced silence, under the banner of the ICRC." We said to ourselves, "The humanitarian organisations are raising the alarm, but this isn't enough given the scale of the massacre and in view of what could well be genocide. We have a special responsibility here because France has a special responsibility." And what we were saying began to appear increasingly in the press. A Human Rights Watch report said that French soldiers had trained the Rwandan soldiers. But every time something like this happened, MSF would put up the barriers: we mustn't speak... the safety of the teams, etc. Then we thought, "How can we bore through this wall from the inside?" I agreed with Jean-Hervé that we needed to push for a higher profile in the media.

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department
(in French).*

On 13 May 1994, MSF France told the press of the fate of their local staff members.



'Almost 100 MSF staff members killed in Rwanda', MSF France **Press release**, 13 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

This is the first time since the creation of the Association [MSF] in 1971 that humanitarian workers have not enjoyed the immunity – enshrined in the Geneva Conventions – normally accorded them in the performance of their duties... these killings were even carried out inside refugee camps or humanitarian enclosures (hospitals, dispensaries) ... On 15 April in the St Joseph de Kibungo Centre, some 2,800 civilians were gathered and sorted. Only 40 people would leave alive. The others were executed between 02:30 and 06:30 with grenades, machetes, machine-guns and R4 rockets. They were buried in a common grave below the kitchen of the bishop's house. Among the victims was an MSF nurse who had been previously dragged out and raped by the soldiers; they decapitated her with a machete.

The MSF France management team organised a public statement to the media.



We had gone through the exact details of what was going to happen. I told Jean-Hervé it had to be done at the weekend because radio and TV reporters don't have anything to do then. We had chosen RTL radio, which has a diverse mass audience. We opened the 7 am to 8 am RTL news bulletin with a hard-hitting report on Sunday morning, and this was repeated on Monday morning. We also made the Journal du Dimanche, a weekend newspaper, which is a very good communication channel... In France it was Jean-Hervé's report that mobilised the rest of the media and perhaps public opinion too.

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department
(in French).*

On 16 May in a TF1 news bulletin, Jean-Hervé Bradol criticised the inertia of France towards the dramatic events in Rwanda. [V10](#) [V11](#)



Interview with Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Programme Manager, 08:00 news bulletin, **TF1** on 16 May 1994 (in French).

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor: With us this evening is a doctor who set up MSF's surgical outpost in Kigali on 13 April. Could you tell us about what you saw there? You say this is a horribly brutal war?

Jean-Hervé Bradol: Yes. Most of the victims we treat are not victims of war, but of a massacre. Most have machete wounds, but others are brutally finished off with automatic rifles. We can't call them war victims. These people are victims of massacres.

PPDA: And this sometimes happened before your very eyes as you transported them by ambulance...

JHB: Exactly. It's extremely difficult to get the casualties back to the hospital for treatment, as the militia drag them out of the ambulances and finish them off in the street.

PPDA: And that is happening systematically in Kigali. You've seen that?

JHB: Yes. For a month the town of Kigali has been divided up into a grid. The houses are searched one by one for people suspected of being hostile to the most extreme forces of the army. The suspects are executed along with the rest of their family. That includes babies, women, old men, absolutely everyone. There are no survivors. And when we went back to the area to try to pick up the wounded, the militia boasted about it, saying "There's no one left to pick up, we've killed them all." And that's exactly what they do. This is a policy of deliberate, systematic, planned extermination.

PPDA: Is this genocide, then?

JHB: Yes. It really is a deliberate massacre on a huge scale.

PPDA: We tend to think "It's Hutu against Tutsi, it's an ethnic war." Whereas it's much more complicated than that.

JHB: That's what they would like us to believe, perhaps to justify the passivity in some quarters. They try to present the Rwandans as tribes slaughtering each other. I believe this description is the final insult to the victims. This is a political conflict. They have to stop portraying the situation in Rwanda as tribes slaughtering each other. What's more, this description is hardly harmless. France has a particularly serious role and responsibility in Rwanda. Those now carrying out the slaughter, those who are implementing this policy of planned, systematic extermination have been funded, trained and armed by France. And that is something that hasn't been exposed properly yet. No French authority has explicitly condemned those responsible for the slaughter. And yet the French State knows these people only too well, since it has provided them with equipment.

PPDA: And that's why you decided to write an open letter to President Mitterrand?

JHB: Exactly. That's why we decided to write an open letter to the President of the Republic, because, clearly, the humanitarian organisations can't cope with this horror alone. What's more, it's now practically impossible for us to work properly in Rwanda, to meet the needs that you described in your report, unless there is robust intervention on the part of the international community; France, since it knows the assassins well, has armed them and equipped them. We believe this policy encourages the slaughter and murder to continue. And now, we have yet to hear any declarations from the French State. We have yet to hear the French State call on the torturers in Kigali and Butare to stop, and I must stress that we find this extremely shocking.

PPDA: And for the moment you can't, of course, assess how many have been killed, because the sources are extremely far apart and there are very few journalists who can see what's going on. How many would you say?

JHB: I think that when we speak of more than 100,000 dead in Rwanda... we should remember that Rwanda has a population of seven million. When quoting such figures, when describing how the capital has been completely divided up and searched house by house to exterminate people, it's tantamount to saying that four million have been killed in a month of political conflict. We've never seen anything like it. When we count the Rwandan employees working for MSF, today we can say that more than 100 Rwandan MSF employees have been assassinated by government armed forces. That has never happened in our history. This is an unprecedented catastrophe even in the 20 years that we have seen of war, death, and horror.

PPDA: Thank you very much, Jean-Hervé Bradol. It was high time someone spoke out forcefully about what is happening over there, as it really is genocide.



'MSF criticises French policy in Rwanda', **Libération** (France) 17 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Yesterday evening on TF1, a Médecins Sans Frontières spokesman back from Kigali denounced France's "grave responsibility" in the Rwandan tragedy, accusing Paris of arming, equipping, and training the government forces responsible for the massacres. MSF sent an open letter to President Mitterrand asking him to intervene against "the systematic, programmed extermination of opponents by a faction supported and armed by France".



Daniel Schneiderman, 'In Competition', **Le Monde** (France), 18 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

As the 8 o'clock bulletin opened, TF1 presenter Patrick Poivre d'Arvor began a long interview with a young MSF doctor in shirtsleeves, who had just returned from Rwanda. The young man could only use words to describe this genocide as there was no film. But surprisingly, his anonymous face and turned-up shirtsleeves conjured up better than any filmed report the invisible horror of the massacres. For an ordinary, unknown witness to make it through to the inner temple and sit there talking with the presenter, on a par with a minister or a film star, he must have been brought there by tens, hundreds of thousands of deaths, and by some enormous sense of guilt. For television to abandon its golden rule: 'no pictures, no story!', the massacres in Rwanda had to be far more atrocious than could possibly be imagined.



Instead of using rough and ready language, I described what I had seen in Kigali. I said that it was a deliberate, planned policy of extermination, with house-to-house searches that I had seen with my own eyes, and that France was largely responsible for the situation. It was France's friends that were doing this – people who had been funded and equipped by France – and yet France had not yet voiced any condemnation, etc. In the end Patrick Poivre d'Arvor (the TF1 8 o'clock news presenter) asked me, "Is it genocide?" and I replied, "Yes."

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, Rwanda Programme Manager, MSF France (in French).



The usual backdrop for a TV report on a crisis includes pictures from the scene showing a journalist and – if possible "the starving people in the background and two or three nurses and doctors so we can say, "Our good Samaritans are there, long live French NGOs!" But this was completely different. Poivre d'Arvor (the news presenter) told me he had been moved by Jean-Hervé's report on RTL. Of course, at the time, in view of the political game TF1 was playing with the Left, he was very interested in the open letter we had sent to President Mitterrand. There was thus every probability that he would do something, and even abandon the usual format of the TV report. Special input came from newsreader Poivre d'Arvor, as it was, he who decided that the interview with Jean-Hervé Bradol would not just be tacked on

to the end of a 25-minute bulletin; instead, he would open the programme and he would speak for six to seven minutes, which – considering there was no film – is unique.

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department
(in French).*

When informed of MSF's intention to go public, the ICRC voiced no objection. In Kigali, safety measures were taken to protect the MSF team from any reprisals.



There was no problem because it was an open letter to Mitterrand, but it didn't go into the details of what was happening on the ground. It was a general MSF stance.

*Dr Marc Gastellu- Etchegorry, MSF France, Deputy Director of Operations
(in French).*



It wasn't my job, and I didn't phone the ICRC to say, "We're going to do this." They didn't stop us from speaking out, but I think that at a certain point we started to shout a bit louder. Maybe at that time in May there was something going on with the ICRC... but I can't say, I don't really know.

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department
(in French).*



The local staff saw us gathering up all the MSF stickers and t-shirts and hiding them. They asked us why. We explained. They said, "They know only too well that there are two MSF members in this team." All the local staff members we worked with knew what was going on. We had made an agreement with Paris and Geneva, and our bags were packed. Philippe Gaillard, the ICRC delegate, had told us, "If MSF is threatened, I'll be told about it, and I promise to get you out with a UNAMIR armoured car." Isabelle and I had an excellent relationship with the ICRC people. We had complete confidence in them, so there was no problem.

*Monique Doux, MSF France/ICRC team in Kigali, Anaesthetic Nurse,
3 May to 13 June 1994 (in French).*

On 17 May 1994, MSF told the press of its fear that the reinforcements for the UN peacekeepers – voted the previous day by the United Nations – would arrive too late.



'UN reinforcements will probably arrive in Rwanda too late' MSF United Kingdom
Press release, 17 May 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Following last night's Security Council resolution on Rwanda, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) urges the United Nations and its member governments to act with the greatest urgency, as the systematic killing of the Tutsi minority continues unabated.

After five weeks of international indifference to the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda, MSF fears that the assembly and deployment of UN troops, which could take more than four weeks, may come too late for the thousands of civilians trapped in the country today...

MSF is also concerned that the UN resolution does not call strongly enough for the prosecution of war criminals. The perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide should be condemned internationally and brought to justice if the country is to stand a chance of restoring the confidence of its people in the rule of law. MSF has lost at least 100 Rwandan aid workers in the pogroms, an unprecedented loss of life in the history of the organisation.

On 18 May 1994, the early afternoon edition of the French daily *Le Monde* carried a page bought by MSF France. It contained an open letter from Médecins Sans Frontières to the President of the Republic, calling on him to accept his political responsibility and put a stop to the massacre in Rwanda. The letter was also forwarded to other sections of the media.



Open letter from Médecins Sans Frontières to the President of the French Republic, published in *Le Monde* (France), 18 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Mr President,

Since France – that bastion of human rights – has such a serious responsibility in the shameful events that have unfolded in Rwanda since 6 April, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- 200,000 Rwandans – perhaps many more – belonging to the Hutu and Tutsi communities, have been slaughtered, without any reaction from the international community, except for the highly publicised evacuation of their own nationals. More than 350,000 Rwandans have had to flee their country, thus creating one of the biggest exoduses in contemporary history.

- This is no mere ethnic conflict; it is the systematic, planned extermination of those opposed to a faction that is supported and armed by France: that of the former dictator Juvénal Habyarimana, whose presidential guard is the main perpetrator of these atrocities.

How can we not see this as a crime against humanity?

How can we believe that France has no way of getting her 'protégés' to put a stop to these massacres?

How are we to interpret your recent, excessively diplomatic statement on TV arguing that "our soldiers cannot be expected to become arbiters of the passions that are tearing apart so many countries?"

Mr President, the international community, and France in particular, must accept its political responsibilities and put a stop to the massacres; it must ensure civilians are protected, and those guilty of war crimes are prosecuted.
Médecins Sans Frontières.



Minutes of the Board Meeting of MSF France, 20 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Philippe Biberson (President): there were several reasons why we decided in favour of a media offensive. We started to think, "Are we really going to work with people who want to kill us?" Moreover, France's role in this conflict had started to trouble us. Since the beginning of the conflict there had been a sort of silence in France, and the massacres hadn't been condemned, whereas France, as we knew, had considerable responsibility for the civilian massacre through supplying weapons to the Rwandan presidential army. And we had good reason to believe that France was still supplying the Rwandan armed forces with weapons. What's more, the death count was unprecedented: these massacres involved whole families, whole villages, babies, children, old men, women. And we could see a further catastrophe looming, with a million people displaced, an exodus of hundreds of thousands of refugees, tens of thousands of deaths still to come, and the need for aid that would result from the tragedy.

No one had spoken out to condemn what was happening. In fact, the United Nations very quickly withdrew 90% of UNAMIR forces from the area and any decisions to commit another international force were extremely vague and lethargic. And we were, of course, aware of the specific role of France in the region. That's why we decided to send an open letter to the President of the Republic, and to back it up with a live interview with JHB on TF1 last Monday. Since then, the press has changed tack, revealing the role of France, condemning the massacres in a different, less simplistic way.



There was the first offensive, the doctor reporting on a crisis, and then the second, political one: the letter. It was a bit scary because Jean-Hervé and I went out on a limb a bit there. Not everyone at MSF agreed on the open letter. The pros and cons of spending 70,000 francs [around 10,000 euros] on a page in Le Monde were discussed. The fundraising director said, "You can't just spend money like that. What will our donors say?" The idea was to look ahead and start to formulate what we would say a month later: "You don't treat a genocide with doctors; you don't respond to a humanitarian crisis with a stethoscope." Even without mentioning genocide, there was a political problem. In the interview with Poivre d'Arvor, Jean-Hervé said more directly what we were spelling out in Le Monde. It is not easy for a humanitarian organisation. We drew attention to the responsibility of the President of the Republic and of the government. "What are the Balladur government and the President of the Republic – supposedly committed to human rights – doing about this situation?" "When we got back to MSF after the interview, towards 8.30 am-9.00 am, Jean-Hervé and I had a whisky and said, 'Oh la la, we've really rocked the boat on this one!'"

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department,
(in French).*

On 18 May 1994, Jean-Hervé Bradol denounced French and United Nations policy in Rwanda in an interview with the French daily *Libération*.



'MSF: late gesture from the UN' *Libération* (France), 18 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

JHB: It is comforting to describe Rwandans as barbarians and difficult to admit the political nature of a conflict in which one has played such an active part. Those responsible for the ongoing massacre in the zones still controlled by Rwandan government forces are the allies of France. They have been trained, armed, and funded by France. Consequently, it is hard to believe that Paris has no way of pressuring those responsible into putting an end to the massacres. Mr Roussin, the cooperation minister, hopes to restore France's image in Rwanda through the French NGOs on the ground. Despite his insistent requests, the NGOs are more than reluctant to take part in this farce. The political nature of the conflict is clear, although Western observers are generally content to see the events in Rwanda through the prism of inter-ethnic or tribal wars. This is the final insult to the victims... During several months in Rwanda, I saw 2,500 UN soldiers who had the chance to stop the massacres, but all they did was stand by and watch. Now the UN is trying to make out that it will adopt a coherent policy. With 200,000 people dead, this is a rather late gesture. The Rwandan population's suffering is not over. Putting a stop to the slaughter, protecting civilians, organising assistance for the wounded, and looking after those displaced by the conflict are extremely urgent matters despite the lack of interest shown by the international community.

On 23 May 1994, *The New York Times* published a 'letter to the editor' written by Alain Destexhe, Secretary-General of MSF International, calling on the UN Security Council to take urgent steps to put an end to the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi.



'Rwandans die while the U.N. procrastinates' Editorial, Alain Destexhe, MSF International General Secretary – *The New York Times* (USA), 23 May 1994 (in English).

Extract:

This letter is to protest the inadequate Security Council Resolution 918 on Rwanda. In no way can this resolution be described as a serious attempt to face up to the horror of the tragedy that is Rwanda today. We at Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the international medical aid agency working with victims inside the country and in the refugee camps, call on the Security Council to take urgent measures to end the genocide being perpetrated against the Tutsi people. The secure areas the resolution mentions must be set up immediately and swift action taken to ensure the deployment of the 5,500 troops it authorizes... It took the Khmer Rouge four years to kill one million people of a population very similar in size to Rwanda's. We have known for a month what is going on. A clearly defined and targeted United Nations intervention is not an option for Rwanda. It is an obligation.

In the days following publication in *Le Monde* of the open letter to the French President, the MSF France Board was invited to meet with advisers to Mitterrand's Africa Unit.



Minutes of the MSF France Board Meeting, 20 May 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Philippe Biberson [president]: the Elysée reacted badly. Mitterrand's advisers told us that the president had been hurt by our unfair attitude. They were more concerned about justifying French policy in Rwanda and informed us that France was earmarking an extra 3 million francs [450,000 euros] in humanitarian aid for NGOs in Rwanda!



Following the interview on TF1, Philippe got a call from the Elysée's [residence of the French President] Africa Unit, asking to see us. Philippe and I met Bruno Delaye and Dominique Pain. They tried very hard to convince us that they were in the right, that they had done everything properly and that they were continuing to do so. We said to them, "We are not interested in listening to your lesson on geopolitics in Africa. We are not sure that your theories will prove correct. You tell us you are right, and yet everything is going wrong. That hardly backs up your case. You would do well to realise that one day. Anyway, we are not here to argue about it, but to say, 'You have friends in Kigali, these friends are exterminating Rwandan Tutsi in Kigali. We assume that you have some influence over them. Can you tell them to stop?'" Our plea was so insistent that, to put us off, Delaye said he couldn't get them on the telephone. That was the level of the discussion... they caught up with us in the foyer and tried to continue the conversation. Delaye said, "You must know that the president took your TV interview rather badly. It wasn't very bright of you. When you have problems like this it is better to see the president himself, to speak to him about it first. Moreover, he would be delighted to see you." Philippe said, "There is absolutely no point in going to hear again what you've just told us. We have nothing to say to Mitterrand if he's going to just repeat the discussion, we've had with you." And so, Philippe refused such a meeting.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).



I believe there was a phone call from the Foreign Ministry to MSF. In any case in the ensuing minutes or hours, the Foreign Ministry issued an official statement to play down what we had said. Maybe it will come out one day, but I'm sure there was a phone call from the Elysée to the government, saying, "What are you playing at? What's going on? We can't have ourselves insulted in front of 15 million people by some idiot humanitarian who turns up and calls himself a doctor." ... I think that the open letter had clarified the standpoint of the serious humanitarian organisations in France and in Europe. Instead of the usual response from a humanitarian organisation, "we go in with supplies, with doctors", we showed that there was a different problem, a political problem and, faced with that, all the humanitarian organisations could do was put a sticking plaster on a wooden leg.

Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department (in French).

The MSF operational sections organised to collect and collate in one document the testimonies of MSF volunteers on events in Rwanda.



'Guide for the collection of information on Rwanda', Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor (in French).

Extract:

The purpose of this guide is to collect and organise all the information collected by the three MSF sections present in Rwanda-Burundi at the time of the massacres. The aim is to reconstruct the events we witnessed first-hand or for which we have reliable information. Faced with the magnitude of the massacres and their brutality, evidence about the reality and singularity of these acts risks disappearing. We can only understand, condemn, and act on it if we have objective personal reports on what happened. The United Nations will probably investigate. A special rapporteur will be appointed by the Human Rights Commission to investigate this situation. The investigation should be part of current UN moves to establish a trial for criminals 'somewhere, someday'. This is likely to hinder the search for other players on the ground who share some responsibility or complicity (UNAMIR, soldiers, foreigners, NGOs.) There is also a risk it will play off the role of the government troops against that of the RPF in other later massacres.

We therefore need to gather our information and check its relevance. What we are doing is creating a common, written MSF memory, rather than leaving this information scattered across the individual memories of the members of our missions. Otherwise, we risk losing all trace of it and it will become blurred with time. We are also aiming to restore a human dimension to this tragedy by highlighting the individual nature of every abuse.

To do this we need to:

- Specify as often as possible the identity of the victims, and the identity of the criminals (their faction)
- Specify dates, places and the names of MSF and other witnesses.

This common memory could then be condensed in a report that MSF could submit to the United Nations inquiry or be used as seen fit should there be any attempt to rewrite history or distort the events we witnessed.

I therefore suggest that each section, working with a common template (appended), collects information from its field staff (either on the ground or back from mission). The information could be collated, and the final report drafted by the legal department of MSF France, by Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier and Pierre Salignon, working with Hanna Nolan and Ed Schenkenberg, lawyers with MSF Holland. Pierre Salignon is ready to start this work and to establish regular contact with MSF Belgium.



'Template for collating information on the massacres and abuses in Rwanda', Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor (in French).

Extract:

Name of witness and MSF post:

Type of incident:

Place:

Day:

Time:

Name and status of victim(s):

MSF to specify its investigation for the three following categories of victim:

1. Patients and casualties treated by us in hospital
2. Refugees in the camps where we work
3. Local staff working for MSF

Account of incident:

As much detail as possible, accompanied by maps, if available, names of other witnesses and other back-up sources. Where possible, these should include names of victims, how many, their status, residence, place of origin, address, and ethnic origin. If possible, specify the place where those executed were buried and where the wounded were taken.

Attackers:

- Name, how many, membership
- Their organisation, weapons, leader, level of organisation or otherwise, cold-blooded or under the influence of alcohol, etc.
- Motive, reasons, what they were heard to say during the incident
- Other damage resulting from the same attack

Name of interviewer:



Ever since the first volunteers got back in April, I'd been collecting and saving their stories. I wanted to save the details and particulars because I realised that they'd be lost forever if we left it until later. I drafted an information form and sent it to the other sections for all the expatriates to complete. All the forms specified the date, place and type of crime, the names of the witnesses, victims, and aggressors. Then all the forms were returned to me, and I drafted a report, using a chronological, region-by-region approach. It became immediately clear that this was an ethnic massacre on a huge scale, and that these were crimes against humanity, genocide. The situation was grave and I wanted to keep some concrete evidence because I knew that in situations such as this, denial and revisionism set in from day one. I knew that at MSF we liked to speak out, but then we would have difficulty tracing the people or exactly what happened. I thought, "When you're dealing with matters as serious as this, you have to gather all possible information, like a registry clerk."

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor (in French).

On 24 and 25 May 1994, Rony Zachariah, Coordinator of the MSF Belgium team in Butare, spoke to the UN Human Rights Commission.



'Presentation to the UN Human Rights Commission, Rwanda' (Emergency Session, Geneva, 24-25 May 1994) (in English).

Extract:

The following incidents/scenes are specific MSF eyewitness accounts of human rights violations or atrocities in Butare, Rwanda...

Date: 20th April 1994

Site: Saga1 and Saga2 refugee camps, 30 km from Butare town.

Incident/Scene:

All MSF local staff (Hutu, Tutsi and Zairean) was gathered violently by militias and civilian police (gendarmierie). The Hutu staffs were then forced to kill their Tutsi colleagues.

Those that refused were killed. Thirty-five Tutsi staff members were either hacked to death or shot. Zairians staff who were set free later revealed the story.



After that the Canadian government called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Special Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, which was the 24 and 25 May 1994. So, basically this commission was meeting to decide if it was a genocide, if there was a need to set up a special rapporteur and if eventually, we should think of a tribunal. So, we decided that we would attend... Each presentation was about six to eight minutes. So, what we did was to describe exactly three incidents, 19 April, 22 and 23 April. Then our special remark was that these massacres continue and are crimes against humanity and genocide. The people responsible were the Interahamwe along with the radical element of the former government. We had four specific questions for the Commission on Human Rights with four recommendations on protection of civilians in conflicts, protection of hospital and aid personnel to allow humanitarian work, the options for avoiding the situation in future and justice for the killers. That is the first formal declaration of MSF before the commission... I had kept a record with my team of day-to-day incidents. When our personnel started to be killed, we had decided "OK now we are going to keep records. One day if we get out of here, we will make them known." So, I had very detailed accounts.

Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium, Medical Coordinator, Butare, April 1994 (in English).



In May, there was a United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Someone from MSF who was well acquainted with the circuit at the United Nations opened the door and Rony Zachariah went in. His statement made an impression at the UN; it was a formal assembly with people who had come there to listen. The Canadian representative said to our team, "I'd never heard a statement like that. Thank you. We needed to hear it." And that's how it started.

Dr Dominique Boutriau, MSF Belgium, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).

In early June 1994, an MSF Holland team set to work in Faisal Hospital in Kigali, in the zone controlled by the RPF.



'Statement on the Rwandan crisis', **message** from Samantha Bolton, MSF Press Office, Nairobi, to the Press Officers of the various sections, 31 May 1994 (in English).

Extract:

As you may all know, a new MSF medical 'International' team has today been approved to begin working in Kigali at the end of this week. A medical team will begin to work on a separate site to the Red Cross field hospital where an MSF surgical team is already working. MSF will be MSF openly and actively – Hurrah! ... I am very excited about this as it now means that for once we can say stuff about Rwanda as MSF, without having to wait for the Red Cross.

In Paris, during a directors' meeting, and following discussion of an article by MSF France Foundation's Director of Studies François Jean, MSF France decided to make a public appeal for international armed intervention to put a stop to the genocide.



'Genocide in Rwanda – how should we act?', François Jean, Director of Studies, MSF France Foundation, June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The massacres carried out in Rwanda since 6 April are without precedent on the African continent. Their scale and character quite naturally raise the question of genocide... More than the scale of the carnage, it is the *modus operandi* that points to genocide... The racist nature of the policy behind the massacres, as well as the clear desire to eliminate every Tutsi, make it possible to qualify this as genocide under the terms of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide of 9 December 1948, to which Rwanda has been a party since 1975. Article II of the Convention qualifies as genocide... acts carried out with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such... Two crucial questions need to be asked:

- Once we agree to call it genocide... it would seem difficult to leave it there, especially as the extermination is continuing... we need to shake this feeling of impunity that has prevailed for too long; this is undoubtedly the best way to reduce the massacres that continue in the government-controlled zones, to limit the massacres or reprisals in RPF zones, to keep violence from resuming in Burundi; and we should remember that it is the reaffirmation of the notion of responsibility and justice that is, perhaps, the best guarantee of a process of social reconfiguration which will have to take place in Rwanda.

- How should we rethink our position and the way we intervene? We are faced with a dilemma: Rwanda has enormous needs; can we abstain, or fail to help the displaced because many of them have blood on their hands? ... between the two extremes of abstention and unqualified intervention, what procedures and safeguards are needed to avoid mistakes? ... given that this is genocide, we can't just say it's 'business as usual'.



The Belgians spoke of genocide. They spoke with intuition but without any political conscience. They did not use the legal, political descriptions we did. François Jean had drafted a text explaining why this was genocide. In the first bulletin in May, I wrote "systematic, programmed extermination". I would never have come up with this legal definition of genocide myself. I must have found it somewhere. The fact that it was used in the first bulletin in May shows that 'genocide' was already in the equation at the time.

*Jean-François Alesandrini, MSF France, Director of Communications Department
(in French).*

The UN and its member states treated Rwanda as a purely humanitarian crisis. MSF France wondered how to counter this 'humanitarian alibi' and the inertia that accompanied it.



In Paris, we had endless discussions about the 'humanitarian alibi'. We couldn't accept that politicians were hiding behind humanitarian work to avoid making decisions that would enable them to save people's lives. This was the Bosnian ethnic cleansing problem all over again. To save lives, it is not enough to allow convoys through. The crisis point has been reached when it comes to genocide. You can't save lives just by sending lorries. Our discussion about the alibi came to a head there, and we followed it through to its logical conclusion. National governments would have us continue our humanitarian work in the middle of a genocide. This is what we felt at MSF, and we had to ask ourselves: "What can we do to make them do something more than just provide humanitarian aid?"

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor (in French).



It was important for us not to be used as an alibi again. We started to discuss it. "Is this reasonable behaviour? If not, then we must suggest another way. And, faced with genocide, that means using force to stop those responsible." ... Our message was clear here: you can't stop genocide with doctors and a few biscuits. The states involved in this situation can't be allowed to pretend that the problem has been dealt with because aid agencies have been sent to the refugee camps in Tanzania, or because ICRC and MSF teams were present in Rwanda. This was a different type of problem calling for a different response. This was our main concern; other concerns were secondary. But it was such a big concern that it overcame the resistance of those among us who said: "An aid agency shouldn't be calling for violent action." Besides, what we were really saying was, "It's not war that we should be calling for, but a police operation. These people are outlaws under the terms of international conventions." Françoise got out the 1948 Convention and quoted the passage requiring the States to intervene. What we were saying was: "Stop them... implement the Conventions that you have signed up to, and don't try to persuade us that we'll be doing humanitarian work."

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager, MSF France (in French).

On 3 June 1994, MSF Belgium told the press it had opened a mission in Nyamata, in the Bugesera region, southeast of Kigali.



'MSF opens a mission in Nyamata in the Bugesera region', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 3 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

As of today, a team of three people (a doctor, a nurse and a logistician/health worker) have settled in Nyamata in the Bugesera region. The team will treat the 100 hospital patients, of which 50 have been wounded in the war. The hospital has been set up in an orphanage that is also home to 300 children. As of Monday, the team will assess the needs of the displaced in the area and will provide them with assistance. According to our team, this aid will cover some 20,000 people.

On 7 June 1994, MSF Belgium told the press it had stepped up its work in Rwanda: in Kigali, the ICRC hospital, the Faisal Hospital, and the camps for the displaced; and in the camps for the displaced around Gitare and Byumba in the north, and in Nyamata to the southeast of Kigali.



'MSF sends back-up team to Kigali', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 7 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Today Médecins Sans Frontières is sending a medical/surgical back-up team of 6 from Nairobi to Kigali, the Rwandan capital. Its task is to assist the civilian population, to set up health centres in four camps in Kigali, take care of water supplies, and health facilities and vaccination against measles. Moreover, a freight plane carrying 8 tons of aid equipment for Kigali is flying out of Schiphol.

From then on, the MSF teams working in the areas taken by the RPF started to see the totalitarian methods used by the new command and the abuses carried out by its army. The teams, which were working in the north (Byumba) and in the southeast (Bugesera) of the country, were under strict surveillance. They were hindered in their work, threatened, and manipulated.



'Summary of incidents with RPF', **Report** by MSF Belgium Coordinator in Rwanda, May to September 1994, 9 July 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Byumba: Dr Canisius, head of the MSF Belgium hospital for the RPF and a Hutu, had expressed himself critically towards the RPF, i.e. their attitude toward us. He had founded a relief assistance group separate to the RPF, which offered the RPF the use of doctors, engineers, etc. to have more Rwandan involvement in emergency relief. This group was seen as political opposition by the person responsible for the entire Byumba region, and a new head of the hospital was introduced to us. After we had missed Dr Canisius for a while, we went to his house and found other people living there. They did not want to say what had happened to the former occupant of the house. After questioning local staff, we found out that Canisius had been executed with his wife and three children because he had been an 'interahamwe'. I went to ask for Canisius in the RPF office and Dr [E] responded: "He is not in the hospital? Did you check his house?" When I answered no I looked [E] deep in the eyes and asked him where I could find him. [E] answered that Canisius was still responsible for health care in the Byumba region and that we would find him, sooner or later. [E] realised very well that I knew that Dr Canisius was dead. I never had a final answer from the RPF concerning this matter.

Dr [EL], a surgeon in the Byumba, MSFB-supported hospital, has received continued warnings and intimidation from the RPF. He is scared but refuses to talk, because he fears that telling the problem to the white man will endanger him more. He seems to have been part of the previously mentioned opposition group. This information comes from a nurse in the same hospital (name known). This nurse reports his findings to me concerning irregularities in the Byumba region. He told me about the questioning of in-patients at gunpoint, the constant infiltration of armed RPF security service personnel

in the hospital at night for these kinds of activities, and the disappearance of at least two patients. He also knows that a local nurse that worked with us from the beginning, disappeared at the end of May.

Lieutenant [J] found a 15-year-old girl stealing clothes inside our hospital compound and took a steel bar to beat her on the head. The victim was bleeding severely from the head and our expat doctor, [B], who saw it all happening, gave first aid. The lieutenant wanted to take the girl away, but [B] refused because he wanted to keep her under 24 hours observation. After an argument, [B] kept the girl in the hospital. I wrote a report to Dr [E]. No official explanation was given, but he took notes.



They targeted us. They said I was the number one on their hit list, that I was miscommunicating the Rwandan truth to the rest of the world. There was a lot of pressure, very personalised intimidation, very subtle things, lots of very little clues that you are very vulnerable... They knew that they could only give me a hint that they were aware of what I was saying and then I would know that I was in danger. So they would say: "You should realise that Byumba is 100,000 metres above sea-level and if your brakes fail while driving down the road, you could have a very terrible accident." My car was parked outside. Anybody could tamper with the car, and nobody would find out. Then they replaced the administrator in the office. The next thing I found out is that my files with this kind of report were being read, in English. So, they knew what I was thinking of the RPF. So, I thought it's better to burn it. The next morning, I walked out in the garden and made a pile of paper. Fourteen, 15 people came around: "Oh, he is burning something, he has something to hide." I got questions: "Burning things and bla bla bla!" And Dr Canisius had been executed. He was critical of the way the RPF was treating the relief in general. He wanted to facilitate, to have more liberty to help organisations to set up a medical aid relief programme. But he was too critical, and we said: "Canisius, you should be careful! You cannot just sit here being a Hutu and say the things you are saying. Be careful." And then somebody told me he woke up in the morning and heard five shots. And in the end, we pressured the staff and they said, "He was an Interahamwe." I said, "He was a what? Even if the guy was an Interahamwe you are not executing three small children that have nothing to do with it." I was very much aware that I had to be careful because we were finding corpses to the left and right. We found people that had been just executed that night, lying dead in their house with their legs sticking out to the street. When I talked about this with [E] he said, "You should be careful because you are not a human rights organisation. You did not come here for human rights." I said, "No, but it's stupid to treat people and not to take care of the fact that they are going to be executed after the treatment, if you don't mind, dear doctor." ... In Rilima hospital, security problems were key. They were stealing patients from the post-operative ward. They would bring people to this hospital whose throat they had just slit and say that it was a suicide attempt... A nurse told me that they would enter the hospital as soon as MSF staff had left. They would go to the beds of people that they didn't trust and would say, "as soon as you are away from this hospital and the protection of this flag, we will take care of you." Several of them were killed and a nurse was killed, disappeared, never seen again. And we witnessed the same thing in Nyamata in Bugesera. By coincidence, when one doctor went back to the hospital to see a woman in labour he saw four soldiers intimidating people, beating them up...

The RPF wanted the names of the ICRC staff from Gitarama, who were mostly Hutu hospital personnel. ICRC refused at the beginning and intimidation grew. I witnessed the intimidation of the ICRC representative in Nyanza with great alarm. They pointed a hand grenade saying,

"If you are not moving now, we blow your head off." They were not going to pull the trigger but that was not very nice to have such a thing pointed at your head.

P [...] MSF Belgium Coordinator in Byumba and Bugesera (Rwanda), May to September 1994 (in English).

On 7 June 1994, MSF submitted the document containing volunteer accounts of the events in Rwanda to the rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission, to the UN Secretary-General and to the members of the UN Security Council.



'Genocide in Rwanda – Eyewitness accounts', **dossier** created by Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor; Pierre Salignon, Lawyer, Head of Mission, MSF, assisted by MSF teams in Rwanda; Anne Fouchard-Brown, MSF France; Hanna Nolan, MSF Holland; Stephan Van Praet, MSF Belgium (version made public in July 1994) (in French).

Extract:

The massacres perpetrated in Rwanda since 6 April are without precedent on the African continent. Their scale and nature most definitely raise the question of genocide. On 8 June 1994, the Security Council noted with the greatest concern reports that acts of genocide had taken place in Rwanda and recalled that this crime falls within the jurisdiction of international law. At the end of June, a UN report acknowledged that the massacre of Tutsi in Rwanda was equal to 'programmed genocide'.

In the investigative report published on 28 June 1994, the UN special rapporteur confirmed that: "the term 'genocide' must from now on be used regarding the Tutsi." The incidents taking place in this country have nothing to do with the regrettable incidents of a civil war, war crimes or any other violation of humanitarian law.

More than the scope of the massacre, it is the *modus operandi* that qualifies it as genocide. This is no spontaneous explosion of violence in a context of anger or self-defence; it is an organised extermination campaign, with the aim of killing the minority Tutsi ethnic group. This campaign has, in all probability, already killed between a quarter and half of the Tutsi population in Rwanda. As for the moderate Hutu, it is interesting to note that they were among the very first victims of the massacres, and that they were not assassinated as political opponents but as 'traitors to the Hutu race'.

The racist nature of the policy behind the massacres, as well as the clear desire to eliminate every last Tutsi are such that we can qualify this as genocide within the meaning of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide of 9 December 1948, to which Rwanda has been a party since 1975.

All reports show that these massacres follow a previously prepared strategy: lists of people to be eliminated had been drawn up, circulated, and used from the very first days of the massacres. This was a well organised, large-scale strategy. Weapons were distributed to the militia and assassins, and the programme was launched as soon as news of the presidential plane crash was made public. It was fuelled by state radio and the private radio station Mille Collines, both of which made broadcasts inciting murder. Rwandan aid personnel working for international humanitarian organisations and belonging to the Tutsi ethnic group were not saved despite the protection conferred on them by the Geneva Conventions of 1949. There were Rwandan members of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) among them.

Once it has been agreed that it is genocide, it is difficult to leave it there, especially as the extermination continues today. The 1948 Convention provides that those responsible for these crimes must be prosecuted, whether they act individually or in an official capacity. However, the UN must adopt appropriate measures if these criminals are to be prosecuted. Since 1948, the Convention on genocide has been waiting for states to adopt these rules and to create a judicial body capable of securing compliance with them. With the title 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide', the 1948 text clearly expressed the need to shatter the sense of impunity that had long prevailed. It is not just a question of securing justice for the victims, but also of trying to discourage more massacres and reprisals. Above all, it is concerned with avoiding a new cycle of violence that affects both refugees and neighbouring countries and turns humanitarian aid into an auxiliary to war.

The UN special rapporteur on human rights violations in Rwanda, René Degni-Segui (Ivory Coast), recommended in the conclusions of his report the creation of an international criminal court to try those responsible for the massacres. In his examination of the causes of the massacres, he mentioned the incitement to hatred and violence promoted with impunity by the local media: "Those responsible for previous and current massacres are known to the people and to the authorities, but they have not been prosecuted. On the contrary, they continue to lead a peaceful life. Worse still, many local officials that were particularly cruel have been promoted, while those who managed to keep the peace and avoid the massacres were dismissed or killed."

Finally, on 30 June, the Security Council decided to establish a group of experts to examine and analyse information relating to serious human rights abuses in Rwanda, including proof of acts of genocide. It will be four months before the Secretary-General has to submit the group's conclusions to the Security Council and make suitable proposals. The concept of an international tribunal for these criminals, which was present in the draft Resolution, has disappeared from the final text.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees now acknowledges its impotence regarding the 'refugee - criminals'. The French mission in Rwanda has no plans to interview these individuals, and UNAMIR still awaits the resources it needs to fulfil a protection mandate that has been far exceeded by current events.

Médecins Sans Frontières has been in Rwanda since March 1993. We have witnessed this continuing genocide, despite the presence of UNAMIR and French intervention. We are also witnesses to the continuing impunity of those responsible. They take political refuge behind the displaced people who remain the captives of these criminals. They benefit economically from the international aid that is supposed to help the needy by compromising the humanitarian organisations in a macabre blackmail exercise. For Médecins Sans Frontières, the word [fight against] 'impunity' is not just synonymous with justice and reconciliation. It is now an essential condition for any aid worthy of the name in Rwanda.

This is why MSF has decided to publish the eyewitness accounts in its possession. The accounts we present here are eyewitness accounts by our staff on the ground. We have deliberately omitted all second-hand accounts we learned of, particularly in our work with the refugees. This evidence was given by French, Belgian and Dutch members of MSF, and by Rwandan members of MSF teams who survived the massacres and have now taken refuge outside Rwanda, working in hospitals and refugee camps.

The crimes reported chiefly regard:

- The deliberate murder of patients, wounded Tutsi in MSF-run hospitals.
- The murder of Rwandan staff assisting MSF teams because they were members of the Tutsi ethnic group.
- The massacre of Tutsi civilians.



Fax from Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor to Catherine Harper, MSF liaison to the UN in New York, 6 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Tomorrow I am thinking of sending our MSF eyewitness dossier on genocide to the special rapporteur, the Secretary-General, and to the president and members of the Security Council. For the latter, I would like to add a letter of support for the draft Resolution on a tribunal for the perpetrators of this crime.



The version of the report that was distributed did not mention the names of the witnesses. Another version for legal use mentioned all the names. It was forwarded to the special rapporteur appointed by the UN Human Rights Commission to be used in the inquiry into acts of genocide.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor (in French).

After an animated discussion at an extraordinary Board meeting on 7 June 1994, the Board of MSF France decided that MSF should call for international armed intervention to put a stop to the genocide.



We had an extraordinary Board meeting about this issue: "Should MSF call for armed intervention?" ... It occurred to us that this was the first time we had called for armed intervention. For us there was no question of it being French intervention, but international intervention. What's more, we weren't specific, we said: "It will just be a matter of stepping in. The attackers are well known. We need to step in, so robust international intervention is needed." So, we will call for armed international intervention. The whole organisation was there in the meeting room. We said: "Even if it means supping with the devil, MSF is calling for armed intervention."

Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France President of board of directors, from May 1994 (in French).



There was no unanimity at MSF France. There could be no unanimity. It was a real dilemma. The discussion was introduced with a paper from François Jean. After debating it, we decided to speak out in public. It was the French section of MSF that decided to launch this Appeal. There was no unanimity. The arguments against the Appeal tended to be of the type: "We are a humanitarian organisation. It is unnatural for a humanitarian organisation to call for armed action, to incite others to kill people." That is how I interpreted the arguments of those who were against the Appeal.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Rwanda Programme Manager, (in French).



We wanted to send a very clear, strong message to states. By using the term 'genocide', we would oblige them to intervene, both morally and legally. What they did not want, from the very outset, was to intervene militarily. We did not want them to repeat what they did in Bosnia.

We were in the context of genocide where an army was using its weapons to exterminate a section of the civilian population. In military terms, this was not a complicated intervention, since it was not a question of stepping in between two armies, but of preventing an army from murdering civilians. Military intervention is complicated when there are several enemies. The use of force posed no great dilemma. As a humanitarian worker, the fact that humanitarian agencies call for armed intervention poses no great problem for me, because when faced with genocide, there is no alternative. There can be no humanitarian position towards genocide. What could such a position be? We could have decided to weep and instead of knitting mittens or sending sacks of rice we could have knocked up a few coffins and sent them to Rwanda. We could have followed up the 'sack of rice for Somalia' operation with a 'coffin for Rwanda' operation in every school! Every child could have made a little coffin and sent it! Moreover, the moral problem of military intervention to put a stop to genocide is clearly defined by international law, which includes an international obligation for armed intervention. To call for armed intervention to deal with genocide is not anti-humanitarian. We wondered about it at MSF, of course, but we decided that it was not a problem.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor (in French).

MSF decided to buy a one-page advertisement in *Le Monde* to publish the Appeal. The drafting procedure began. MSF informed the ICRC of its intention to speak out in favour of armed international intervention.



*We started to explain this to our ICRC friends who said, "You are right." The ICRC was increasingly uneasy because its teams could see this stuff at first hand in Gikongoro and Kibuye. Their delegates reported that there were lists, that people were disappearing from the camps, that people were coming for them to kill them. The ICRC told us, "Go ahead!" And then, at the last minute, they said, "It's a bit silly, because in a few days' time a replacement team will be there." We said, "OK. We'll get out and then speak out." And then it dragged on and on. The ICRC couldn't find a surgeon, or an anaesthetist... It was Brigitte, the Director of Operations who dealt with relations with the ICRC. At the same time here, with the Communications and other departments, we were preparing our insert for *Le Monde*. The page had been reserved. We started to draft the text. We were waiting for the ICRC. We had convinced ourselves to wait for the replacements to arrive before 'getting out and speaking out'. That's why we lost so much time, at least a week.*

Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France, President of board of directors, from May 1994 (in French).



The battle of Kigali had started, and we were afraid the local situation would degenerate as the Interahamwe were all around the hospital, and even on the inside. There were even MSF workers on the other side of town. I remember a call I got from Wouter van Empelen saying that I should never leave a team like that in the middle of this chaos, and that everyone would have to be evacuated. I had agreed with the ICRC that we wouldn't

remove the team until it had been replaced... One morning, very early, I received a telephone call from the team in Kigali, saying: "Listen, they can't replace us in time, we have to put the Appeal off." And, in the heat of the moment, I said, "Of course. We'll put it off until the ICRC finds some volunteers to replace our team." Bernard Pécoul took this up, saying, "No way, there's no question of postponing the Appeal." It was then that the team said, "Seeing that the Appeal will be made, and that the ICRC hasn't time to find substitutes, we've decided to stay."

Dr Brigitte Vasset, MSF France Director of Operation, (in French).

The President and Director of Operations of MSF France held a meeting with Alain Juppé, Foreign Minister of the French government.



I went to see Mr Juppé with Brigitte [Vasset, Director of Operations] two days before going to see President Mitterrand. We said, "They say weapons are being delivered to the Rwandan government, to the temporary government or the escaping government. Is it true that France is still delivering weapons to Goma?" Mr Juppé said, "Listen, this is all very confused. There were indeed cooperation or defence agreements with the government; there are perhaps some leftovers from that, but as far as my department is concerned, I can tell you with all certainty that since the end of May there have been no further weapons consignments to the Habyarimana regime." But at the same time, he said, looking out to the other side of the Seine, towards the Elysée, "But I have no idea what might be happening over there." It was pathetic!

*Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France, President of board of directors, from May 1994
(in French).*

On 10 June 1994, MSF France informed the press of the massacre of 70 people in the Collège Saint André in Kigali.



'Massacres continue in Kigali', **Press release** MSF France, 10 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The militia who executed 70 people yesterday returned to the Collège Saint André, in the Nyamirambo district of Kigali, today. They came to execute men, women, and children. While trying to get away, a priest was wounded by the militia, who also killed a woman and her children who were with him. At this very moment, the militia are executing the last Tutsi refugees in the school. The wounded priest is currently being treated at the ICRC/MSF hospital.

On 14 June 1994, three MSF directors met with the President of France at his request. He told them that France intended to intervene in Rwanda. V12 



Philippe, Bernard, and I were received by François Mitterrand. It was a completely different tune to the first discussion that we'd had with his team... what he said differed radically from the conversation we'd had in May. He threw in a remark to the effect that our intervention, our 'propaganda', had been badly received and that he had been hurt to be treated like that... Philippe asked President Mitterrand: "How would you describe the Rwandan interim government?" Mitterrand said, "They are a bunch of assassins. What's more, Agathe Habyrimana came to my house. She's mad. She wanted to launch an Appeal to continue the genocide on French-speaking radio. We had trouble calming her down. Now we've had enough, we're going in. We'll try to sort things out and save people..." He told us about Operation Turquoise, before it was officially announced... there had been a change in the French position, from what I perceived as benign neutrality towards the interim government, to a humanitarian-hostile position. Those people were becoming much less attractive company now. France started to realise that it would have a major international political problem on its plate and launched Operation Turquoise.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).



I went to see Mitterrand the very evening I got back, in my bush clothes. By that time, they had changed their discourse. I think that they had decided to launch their operation and they were starting to say, "We've realised that what is happening is extremely serious; we're going to go in."

Dr Bernard Pécoul, MSF France, General Director, (in French).

On 15 June 1994, a group of French NGOs and the National Committee for French-Rwandan Solidarity launched an Appeal in the French daily, *Libération*: 'Let's not let hunger finish off the genocide.' It included an appeal for donations and said there would be a fund-raising and awareness week from 27 June to 3 July.



'Rwanda Emergency – Let's not let hunger finish off the genocide', *Libération* (France), 15 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Since 7 April in Rwanda, between 200,000 and 500,000 people have already been massacred. The international community was there, but it gave up. We denounce this failure to assist a country in danger. Today, nearly two million people have been displaced. They have nothing: no water, no food and no healthcare. We demand that the international community faces up to its responsibilities and protects the civilian population. We call for all those responsible for these crimes to be prosecuted. We refuse to let Rwanda die.

As independent organisations, we ask you to join us in fighting the indifference of the states, and to foster in France a strong solidarity movement to enable Rwanda to survive and prepare for the future.

Appeal: "I also call on the international community to put an end to the massacres in Rwanda and I now donate emergency aid so that someone can eat, drink and receive treatment."



At the time, as part of the Action contre la Faim campaign, there was a full-page advert in the newspapers, basically saying: "There is no point asking people to fight in Rwanda. Rwandan children need food and water." I remember this ad in Libération very clearly. We realised that the humanitarian organisations were likely to end up playing this role and we thought, "They're still trying to persuade us that the Rwandan problem can be solved with a few doctors and biscuits."

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, Rwanda Programme Manager, MSF France (in French).

In a press release on 15 June 1994, MSF France launched an "urgent appeal for hostilities to cease and for immediate UN intervention" and called a press conference for 17 June.



'Rwanda Emergency', MSF France **Press release**, 15 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

MSF Press Conference, Friday 17 June, 09:30... to save those lives that can still be saved, and with genocide still ongoing, Médecins Sans Frontières is launching an urgent appeal for hostilities to cease and for immediate UN intervention. Philippe Biberson, President, Bernard Pécoul, Director, and Jean-Hervé Bradol, head of programme, will explain the operational impact of the current situation. They will report on their discussions with François Mitterrand, Alain Juppé and political leaders in Washington.

MSF France sent the appeal to France's political leaders.



Letter from the President of MSF France to the President of the French National Assembly, 15 June 1994 (in French).

Mr President,

The situation in Rwanda is a scandal... and the attitude of the international community is ever more terrible in its inertia and duplicity. We are going to launch a public Appeal. We enclose this Appeal, which we will make public on Friday, 17 June, after taking measures to ensure the safety of the medical teams and patients in the ICRC-MSF hospital in Kigali. The hospital is surrounded by Rwandan governmental forces and is permanently open to attacks and reprisals on the witnesses who have taken refuge there.

We would ask you to express your support by signing the Appeal and returning it to us as soon as possible.

Back from an exploratory mission in the RPF zone, MSF Belgium's Director of Communications declared in the Belgian press that "people were banded together according to their ethnic origin before being massacred. We must seek out those responsible."



'It really is genocide', *Vers l'avenir* (Towards the Future) (Belgium) 15 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

When it comes to describing the massacres, the NGOs do not hide their distaste: it really is genocide... "people were banded together according to their ethnic origin before they were massacred," said Dr Harzé of MSF Belgium. "Those responsible must be found." He came back from Rwanda ten days ago after an exploratory mission in Bugesera, the area occupied by the RPF in the southeast of the country. The doctor had passed through deserted areas where Tutsi (the ethnic minority) corpses were piled up in their hundreds in common graves.

During a meeting of the Directors of Operations of the various MSF sections, MSF Belgium and MSF Holland expressed reservations about the MSF France's decision to launch an appeal for armed intervention to protect the Tutsi.



Minutes of the international meeting of the Directors of Operations of MSF Belgium, MSF France, MSF Holland, MSF Luxembourg and MSF Spain on Rwanda, 15 June 1994 (in English).

Extract:

MSF Belgium is concerned that if MSF France leaves Kigali MSF will no longer have any action on the FAR side and will not be able to do so in the near future. This could be interpreted by some as a stain on MSF's neutrality.

MSF Holland is very worried about the possible consequences of such campaigns and is very hesitant about whether they should be carried out at all. They feel they cannot open a mission in Butare because it would be too dangerous after the release of a press campaign. They insisted that they did not want the report by Africa Rights to be associated with MSF's campaign in any way whatsoever as the journalist who had written it was unreliable. They also insisted that no names should be mentioned in any report distributed by MSF as this was not MSF's role – MSF France agreed to both these terms.

The same day, the French Foreign Minister declared that France was ready to intervene on the ground in Rwanda, with its principal European or African partners. On 16 June, the President and Director of Operations of MSF France went to Geneva to tell the ICRC Director of Operations that MSF was going to make a public statement.



Minutes of the international meeting of the Directors of Operations of MSF Belgium, MSF France, MSF Holland, MSF Luxembourg and MSF Spain on Rwanda, 15 June 1994 (in English).

Extract:

MSF France has decided not to launch the campaign until its team has been evacuated from Kigali. (The ICRC may denounce MSF's campaign in order to assure the security of the people in the hospital, the ICRC in Geneva has been informed of the actions MSF/F intends to take and supports it.) The open letter that was addressed to President Mitterrand had been circulated in Goma – it is clear that any future campaign will be made known in Rwanda and will have repercussions. During the exploratory mission in Western Rwanda, they were told by the FAR that if MSF went to the press again with stories on Rwanda they would not be able to work in FAR zones.



At the same time, I went to Geneva with Philippe Biberson [MSF France President of board of directors] because the situation was a mess. We went to see the ICRC Director of Operations to tell him the whole story. We had brought him the Appeal and he only objected to the word "Interahamwe". Philippe said, "I'll see to it." He came back and, I might be wrong of course, but I don't think that Alesandrini even called Le Monde. He said, "It's too late, it has been printed." The Appeal was published, and the team was still at its post. It was only by chance that nothing happened. The team stayed to work under the ICRC flag until Kigali was taken by the RPF at the beginning of July. If publication was slow, it wasn't an operational problem. It was due to the fact that we spent days drafting the message because everyone wanted to rewrite it. I myself had blocked the Appeal just two days before it was published.

Dr Brigitte Vasset, MSF France, Director of Operations (in French).



We could sense that Mr Juppé was about to make a declaration, and we thought, "We're going to get there when the battle is over; we'll call for armed intervention when it has already been proposed." We began to see that it was increasingly likely that France would propose to intervene. There had already been some negotiation, and everyone had said, "Not without us." The Americans and the Canadians had withdrawn. One day Brigitte said to me: "You need to call the ICRC Director of Operations; we have a very good relationship with him, and you should say, 'We can't wait any longer, team or no team. Tomorrow we're putting our message in Le Monde.' I was under pressure; I did not know exactly what negotiations there had been with the ICRC. I called the ICRC Director of Operations, and without meaning to, I gave him an ultimatum: "I'm informing you that if your teams are not there tomorrow, we're going public in Le Monde whether we are in or out." He started to scream and shout. He was right because I had not realised that we had placed this constraint on ourselves. He said, "We only speak out when we are out of there." I answered, "I don't think I've understood you right, I'll get the train, I'm on my way." I hung up and set off for Geneva, saying to the others, "Don't do a thing." It was a Wednesday or a Thursday evening. The ICRC Director of Operations said to me: "I don't know how we got into this mess. We could have easily discussed it, but now you are giving me an ultimatum, putting me in a terrible situation." I said, "After all there's no danger in staying. I know that you have found it impossible to find a team, you've been trying for two weeks, and I don't blame you because I realise that people aren't exactly clamouring to go there. Our team is fine, and it's prepared to stay. But we can't wait any longer to publish the Appeal, the French government is about to..." He said, "I can see that

only too well. Go ahead, go ahead." I said, "Then what's the problem?" He said, "It's a misunderstanding. We never made it a condition that you had to be out of there!" We relaxed a little bit, and out of courtesy and to bury the hatchet, I said to him: "Here is the text, if you want to read through it, you won't be taken by surprise." He read it and said, "Good, it's excellent. It's fine by us. There's just one point there, maybe" ... There were three words that disturbed him, they didn't even have anything to do with the main message. As a goodwill gesture, I promised to remove the three words. I returned – content – to Paris, thinking, "That's settled with the ICRC, then. We stay in and we speak out. We can publish it tomorrow in Le Monde." Bernard Pécoul (General Director) and Jean-François Alesandrini (Director of Communications) said to me, "That's just as well because it's already gone!" I said: "Oh! But there's one small problem; I promised to remove three words." They went overboard, saying, "The text is at the printers, we can't change a thing." Alesandrini said to me, "We didn't send you to negotiate the text." I left slamming the door. In the event, the ICRC didn't say anything about the three words.

Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France, President of board of directors from May 1994 (in French).



We had really decided to speak out and to be heard, to provoke the French. We were saying, "You can't stop genocide with doctors." But we wanted to say that to President Mitterrand and Mr Balladur and Mr Juppé at the Foreign Office and Mr Léotard at Defence. And then the ICRC – which had wanted to stop us from doing it – blocked the whole thing. Brigitte and Philippe went to see them in Geneva and had to listen to a sermon. It was a very noisy meeting and not at all clear. That evening they phoned us saying, "Wait!" We said to them, "It's too late, it's gone!" I took it upon myself to say "This has been a very difficult decision to take. We can't stop just because of a quarrel with the ICRC. We must face up to the quarrel and accept it." The ICRC discovered that we had spoken out in the following day's newspaper.

Dr Bernard Pécoul, MSF France, General Director (in French).

On 17 June 1994, MSF France launched an appeal for armed international intervention at a press conference. It was published in a quarter page insert of *Le Monde* dated 18 June but was on sale in Paris as of 13:00 the day before. [V13](#)



MSF France **Appeal** published in *Le Monde* (France), 18 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Mr President of the Republic,
Mr Prime Minister,
Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen Members of Parliament,
In Rwanda, in the space of two months, hundreds of thousands of human beings have been massacred and several tens of thousands are next in line. Their desperate appeals for assistance reach us every day. For the last fifty years, since the end of the Second World War, the planned, methodical extermination of a community has had a name: **GENOCIDE.**

Today, we are eyewitnesses to these events. The carefully drawn up lists of people to be killed were circulated from the very first day. The killing is done to order, and homes are 'cleansed' one by one. We know who is responsible for these massacres: they are the militias controlled by the supporters of the late dictator.

Following the lead of the UN Secretary-General, the UN Security Council has acknowledged that genocide is taking place. Today, to fail to back words up with action is obscene. Genocide calls for a radical, immediate response. The only response to date has been first aid. But **genocide cannot be stopped by doctors!**

As a matter of urgency, everything must be done to stop these massacres, by supporting the immediate intervention of the United Nations to genuinely oppose the murderers and protect the survivors. Since 16 May, the Mission of the United Nations in Rwanda has been authorised to use weapons to protect those in danger, yet it has not done so as it does not have the means at its disposal. We call on the Member States of the Security Council of the United Nations to guarantee protection for the survivors and to arrange for prosecution of those responsible for the genocide. In Rwanda, only a return to a peace based on justice will put a stop to the slaughter and the dreadful cycle of reprisals and prevent the exodus to neighbouring countries.

If the words Justice and Humanity still mean something, everyone, as an individual and as a citizen, must demand that their representatives act immediately to save those lives that can still be saved from the murderers. How many more murders will we allow to happen over the next few days, the next few weeks? How long will we close our ears to the constant appeals for help?

Mr President of the Republic, Prime Minister, Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen, you have the power: stop the genocide!



'Médecins Sans Frontières Press conference - Rwanda: You can't stop genocide with doctors!' **Dossier** distributed at the MSF France **Press conference** on 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The massacres perpetrated in Rwanda since 6 April are without precedent on the African continent. Their magnitude and the chronology of events most raise the question of genocide.

The UN Secretary-General and the Security Council have acknowledged the existence of this genocide. On 8 June 1994, the Security Council noted with the greatest concern the reported acts of genocide in Rwanda and recalled that this crime fell within the jurisdiction of international law. More than the scope of the massacre, it is the modus operandi that qualifies it as genocide. This is no spontaneous explosion of violence against a background of anger or self-defence; it is an organised extermination campaign to kill Tutsi. This campaign has, in all probability, already killed between a quarter and half of the Tutsi population. As for the moderate Hutu, it is interesting to note that they were among the very first victims of the massacres, and that they were not assassinated as political opponents but as 'traitors to the Hutu race'. The racist nature of the policy behind the massacres, as well as the clear desire to eliminate every Tutsi are such that we can qualify this as genocide within the definition of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide of 9 December 1948, to which Rwanda has been a party since 1975.

All reports show that these massacres follow a previously prepared strategy: lists of people to be eliminated had been drawn up, circulated, and used from the very first days of the massacres.

- a well-organised strategy: weapons distributed to the militia and murderers
- a large-scale strategy, launched as soon as the attack on the presidential plane had been made public
- a strategy fuelled by broadcasts inciting to murder on state radio and the private radio station Milles Collines

All the above belie the official Rwandan government version of 'spontaneous revenge'. Once we agree to call it genocide, can we leave it at that, especially as the extermination is ongoing? The 1948 Convention provides that those responsible for these crimes must be prosecuted, whether they have acted individually or in an official capacity. The UN must adopt appropriate measures if these criminals are to be prosecuted. Since 1948, the Genocide Convention has been waiting for states to adopt these rules and to create a judicial body capable of securing compliance with them.

The very title of the 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide' and its 1948 text clearly express the need to fight against the culture of impunity that had long prevailed. States, however, have still not adopted the implementing rules for the Genocide Convention nor established a judicial body to ensure their respect. It is not just a question of securing justice for the victims, but also of trying to discourage more massacres and reprisals. Above all, it is concerned with avoiding a new cycle of violence that affects both refugees and neighbouring countries and turns humanitarian aid into an auxiliary to war.



'MSF calls for 'armed intervention' in Rwanda', **AFP** (France), 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

On Friday in Paris, Médecins Sans Frontières called for an immediate 'armed intervention' in Rwanda to protect the moderate civilian Tutsi and Hutu population and to stop the 'genocide'.

According to Dr Philippe Biberson, President of MSF, this is the first time that a humanitarian organisation has called for armed intervention. "This is an exceptional step for us, but it is a real emergency. Immediate military action is required. The efforts of the Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, are 'positive', but declarations are no longer enough, it is time for action," said Doctor Biberson.

Mr Juppé declared on Wednesday that France "would be ready to intervene on the ground" in Rwanda "with its main European or African partners" subject to the "green light from the United Nations" to protect those groups threatened with extermination.

Information about massacres perpetrated in villages was also included in the dossier distributed at the press conference, as well as information about massacres perpetrated by RPF soldiers, and information about the failure of the United Nations Mission in Rwanda.



Dossier distributed at the MSF France **Press conference** on 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

While the murders and massacres carried out in Kigali and large towns like Butare were reported directly, accounts of the incidents that took place in smaller towns have relied on the reports of survivors in Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania. The following relates only the facts as reported by humanitarian teams or in the press and does not aim to provide an exhaustive list of abuses. Even today, there are still some small havens where thousands of people have taken refuge. These people are in grave danger. [...]

- 11 May: RPF attack on the military camp in Gako

- 12-15 May: RPF arrives in Maza and Nzangwa

- 15 May: RPF massacre in Maza and Nzangwa

- 15 May: RPF reaches the Burenge camp

... RPF abuses: a Burundi woman who had taken refuge in the Maza camp told us that, around 15 May, RPF soldiers entered the camp and rounded up the refugees to take them to the camp in Nzangwa, where they were imprisoned in the mosque and the food centre. The soldiers then shot into the crowd and bludgeoned the survivors. She lost three of her children and her husband but was able to flee with her 9-year-old son. She has a wound at the back of her head. [...]

The United Nations Mission in Rwanda. On May 17, faced with the massacres and the enormity of the human tragedy, the Security Council asked UNAMIR to guarantee as far as possible the safety and protection of the displaced people and civilians in danger in Rwanda. The Security Council agreed that UNAMIR could use force to protect the inhabitants and areas under threat of attack. Consequently, the UNAMIR contingent was boosted from 250 to 5,500 soldiers. However, while it had only taken a few hours to mobilise the soldiers needed to evacuate Westerners from Kigali, more than one month after this decision, no additional soldiers had arrived on the ground. The African contingents were still waiting to take delivery of equipment from Western countries.

The appeal for armed international intervention was also addressed to Belgian ministers and deputies and sent to the Belgian media as a press release. The text was the same as the one of the appeals to the French authorities. But the sentence “You can’t stop genocide with doctors!” was removed and replaced by “stop the genocide!”. A description of MSF activities in Rwanda and of the victims’ needs was added.



‘Rwanda Appeal’, **Press release** MSF Belgium, 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Ministers, Honourable Members,

Today, to fail to back words up with action is obscene. Genocide calls for a radical, immediate response. The only response to date has been first aid.

It is urgent that every effort be made to stop these massacres, by supporting the immediate intervention of the United Nations to genuinely oppose the murderers and protect the survivors. Since 16 May, the UN Mission in Rwanda has been authorised to use weapons to protect those in danger. It has not done so as it does not have the

necessary means at its disposal... How long are we going to close our ears to the constant appeals for help?

Honourable Ministers and Members, you have the power: stop the genocide!

As you read this appeal, Médecins Sans Frontières is stepping up its activities in Rwanda, in Byumba, Nyamata, Nyanza, Ruhango and in Kigali. In these areas we have found thousands of Rwandans at death's door. They urgently need food, surgery, and medical care.



'The French-backed humanitarian operation is flagging. Hutu soldiers continue their dirty work', *Le Soir* (Belgium), 19 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

At MSF emotions are running high. Both in Brussels and Paris the organisation has called for immediate armed intervention to protect the civilian population and to stop the genocide.



I don't think there was a problem of different perceptions or that there was the slightest difficulty in talking about it in those terms. There were two reasons for this. Initially, after Butare, things were quite clear. We didn't pay too much attention to semantic niceties such as: "Is this genocide or not?" We just said, "We go there, and we talk about genocide, considering the enormous scale of the events." The second thing is that the perpetrators of the genocide had fled. So, if this was a 'public denunciation' it had no operational consequences because the murderers were on their way to Congo or Tanzania. There was no operational risk in crying shame upon the defeated. So, there was no problem between the sections... the phrase was impressive: "You don't stop a genocide with doctors." It was a call to military action. We had seen the UN forces withdraw like cowards. In Belgium, we had seen 10 Belgian parachutists murdered and our reaction was – obviously – that it was a disgrace to withdraw with our tail between our legs. So, there was no discussion about using the term 'genocide' or the call to armed intervention. The latter wasn't even a problem. I don't remember drafting this appeal together. The French section suggested the slogan and we thought it was very good. There was no discussion. It was so clearly right, so hard-hitting. Everyone liked it very much. It was the French who invented the slogan, they almost used it without telling us, but that was no problem for us in Brussels.

Dr Eric Goemaere, MSF Belgium, General Director, (in French).



I don't remember blocking the French initiative. We didn't say anything like: "We are against it." At least somebody was prepared to do something.

Dr Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland, General Director (in French).

During the 17 June 1994 press conference, the MSF France Executive Director, just back from the Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania, denounced the violent control of the camps by the former Rwandan leaders responsible for genocide. He called the camps a 'humanitarian façade'.



Dossier distributed at the MSF France press conference on 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The Benaco camp – some fifteen kilometres from the Rwandan border – opened at the end of April, following the huge exodus of Rwandans fleeing the advancing RPF troops in the east of the country. Most of the refugees in the camp (220,000 according to MSF, 350,000 according to [UN]HCR official figures) are of Hutu origin... The camp is divided into 19 ‘communes’, thus mirroring the way Rwanda is organised administratively and socially. A mayor heads each ‘commune’ in the camp and acts as a go-between for the international organisations and the people. Some mayors (some fifteen people, including their families) who have been accused of the massacres in Rwanda have been imprisoned in the neighbouring town of Ngara (Tanzania). This is a flexible form of imprisonment; one of them was able to leave his tent, pitched in the garden of the gendarmerie in Ngara, to go back to Benaco. Despite requests from the [UN]HCR and the Tanzanian authorities, he refused to leave the camp, and a crowd of approximately 5,000 people supported him in this. Members of international humanitarian organisations were threatened.



‘MSF calls for “armed intervention” in Rwanda’, **AFP** (France), 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extracts:

At the same press conference, MSF condemned the situation in the Rwandan refugee camp in Benaco, Tanzania, which seems to have become a Hutu ‘stronghold’, according to Doctor Bernard Pécoul, MSF Executive Director, just back from the camp. “We saw – and were even part of – the rehabilitation of the torturers under cover of international humanitarian aid. It is sickening,” he added.



‘The French-backed humanitarian operation is flagging. Hutu soldiers continue their dirty work’, **Le Soir** (Belgium), 19 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

MSF is also concerned about the situation in the refugee camp in Benaco, Tanzania, where all the representatives of the humanitarian organisations have been obliged to get out, leaving behind food and equipment, under threat from several thousand refugees, some of whom have been identified as responsible for the massacres.

During the second half of June 1994, MSF France asked its donors to support its appeal to an international armed intervention by signing a petition. The text was included in a special issue of *MSF Info*.



'The Genocide' – with a **petition** 'Stop the genocide in Rwanda' in **MSF Info**, sent by MSF France to its donors, June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Appeal published in Le Monde accompanied by the following text:

"This Appeal is made by all MSF doctors. If it is to be heard by those who have the power to stop the genocide, we need to gather as many supporters as possible, people who are concerned about the suffering of others. We need your support. Do not delay: when children are pursued by murderers, every day counts. Send us proof of your support today by return of post, by signing the Appeal accompanying this paper... you are the force that can save thousands of people from genocide. Your moral support is as essential to us as your financial assistance."

In the United States, the MSF France Programme Manager met representatives of the US administration and reported on what he had seen in Rwanda. He asked them to lend armoured vehicles to UNAMIR to evacuate the casualties. He held a press conference in New York and repeated the Appeal launched in Paris.



'Humanitarian Group Says, "it's a matter of hours for the survivors of genocide in Rwanda". Appeal for immediate intervention made on Capitol Hill and at the United Nations', MSF USA **Press release**, 16 June 1994 (in English).

Extracts:

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, who directs the Rwanda Desk for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/ Doctors Without Borders in Paris, is in Washington and New York this week to meet with legislators and UN diplomats to appeal for an immediate intervention in Rwanda. Dr Bradol, who is fluent in English, will be available for media interviews on Friday, June 17. His meetings tomorrow are scheduled on the same day that MSF will publish in Le Monde an open letter to the President and Prime Minister of France, urging the government to go beyond declarations of possible intervention and take swift action to stop the continuing genocide.



'UN frees Rwandans trapped behind the frontline – France to send units to border', **Washington Sunday Times** (USA), 19 June 1994 (in English).

Extracts:

The respected relief group Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), for the first time in its history, has called for military intervention. But it said France, because of its past involvement there, should limit itself to logistical and financial support.



In mid-June, I went to the US to tell the American government what was happening, to tell them that it was their fault that there were no armoured vehicles to evacuate the wounded. It was difficult to get the casualties across the front line because UNAMIR had no armoured cars. I told them that if they could lend UNAMIR the vehicles they had stationed in the area after Somalia, a medical evacuation could be carried out and save lives. I

saw Mr Steinberg of the US National Security Council, one of the US President's security advisers. I told him and other people this.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Rwanda Programme Manager, (in French).



The Americans had an obligation to send armoured vehicles, but they couldn't get on with it. The bureaucracy was incredible. I'll always remember Donald Steinberg saying, after all we'd said, "You see, there's a lot of red tape." And, almost as an afterthought, he said, "But I understand what you mean, I am Jewish and so I am sensitive to the genocide question." It was very significant because, in the space of a few minutes, a VIP had referred to genocide, whereas this was at a time when the United Nations was trying not to use the word. He said it with a hint of personal understanding, not just in terms of history, but also family. On the other hand, he managed to say in the same sentence, "I am sorry. There is so much red tape. I can't do anything, it's the bureaucracy." He was the President's closest advisor. So that meant that there was no real political will to equip UNAMIR properly on the ground.

J [...], MSF USA, Executive Director (in French).

On 18 June 1994, French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, announced that France would address the UN Security Council regarding a 'military intervention with a humanitarian objective' in Rwanda.

On 20 June, the President of MSF France board of directors sent a letter to the Secretary-General of the RPF, reminding him of MSF's independence from all political powers.



Letter from Philippe Biberson, President of MSF France board of directors, to Théogène Rudasingwa, Secretary-General of the RPF (in French).

Extracts:

Please find enclosed the two appeals that Médecins Sans Frontières has published in recent weeks in connection with the situation in Rwanda. The first, on 18 May, to the President of the French Republic, called on France to face up to its responsibilities and to force "a faction supported and armed by France", to stop the massacres, protect the civilian population and prosecute war criminals.

The second appeal, published on 17 June, was also addressed to the French President and Prime Minister, reminding them of the genocide taking place in Rwanda and called for immediate UN intervention to protect the civilian population against this genocide, and for all efforts to be deployed to persuade the Member States of the UN Security Council to argue for prosecution of those responsible for the massacres. At no point did Médecins Sans Frontières call for or endorse unilateral intervention from any government.

I was anxious to apprise you of the position of our organisation. Médecins Sans Frontières is a non-governmental organisation. It acts and expresses itself independently of any political power.

On 21 June 1994, the Communications Officer for the MSF movement in Nairobi asked those in charge of the various sections for clarification of the MSF position on French armed intervention.



Message from Samantha Bolton (MSF Nairobi) to all Rwanda desks and MSF Communications Departments, 21 June 1994 Re: Rwanda Communication Policy (in English).

Extracts:

Dear all

1. Please could we have a teleconference between media departments ASAP to decide what is the common MSF policy on military intervention UN/French and on Benaco.
2. I am getting phone calls from journalists wanting to know “is MSF pulling out of Benaco because they are too sacred and what is the position on the French troops?”
3. It seems as though European headquarters are delaying making a decision on what to say, but here in the field it is urgent. In Nairobi and in Kigali it is extremely confusing and misinforming and therefore rumours are forming that we don't have one common statement for sections (not even a weak and watered down statement). What am I supposed to say? Nothing, like the Dutch, or something like the French and Spanish?
4. Publicly and internally MSF is in a mess, and we need to clarify our position. If the French troops come in, the RPF has told MSF to pull all French staff out. The government radio is already threatening us because we are associated with radical MDM statements and because we made genocide statements. MSF is wrongly seen to be pro-French intervention because we called for military strengthening of the UN without specifying France.
5. I know it is difficult for all MSFs to come out with a common statement but non-information causes misinformation and rumours, which are more dangerous than a clear and not necessarily radical statement. Every day I am encountering rumours both with the UN and journalists who are hearing from other sources about what MSF is or is not doing.
6. As far as I can gather all MSFs agree on the following:
 - a) MSF calls on the international community to reinforce the UN presence in Rwanda as quickly as possible
 - b) Because of the biased history of French intervention in the region and because humanitarian operations will be endangered, MSF calls on the Security Council to block the French offer.

On 22 June 1994, the UN Security Council voted Resolution 929 authorising France to lead Operation Turquoise under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, with a mandate to “protect the civilian population and provide humanitarian aid... in an impartial and neutral fashion.” The resolution stated that “the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda constitutes a threat to peace and security in the region.”



Resolution No. 929 (1994) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3392nd meeting, on 22 June 1994 (in English).

Extracts:

The Security Council,

Reaffirming all its previous resolutions on the situation in Rwanda, in particular its resolutions 912 (1994) of 21 April 1994, 918 (1994) of 17 May 1994 and 925 (1994) of 8 June 1994, which set out the mandate and force level of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR),

Determined to contribute to the resumption of the process of political settlement under the Arusha Peace Agreement and encouraging the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Rwanda to continue and redouble their efforts at the national, regional, and international levels to promote these objectives,

Stressing the importance of the cooperation of all parties for the fulfilment of the objectives of the United Nations in Rwanda,

Having considered the letter of the Secretary-General of 19 June 1994 (S/1994/728),

Taking into account the time needed to gather the necessary resources for the effective deployment of UNAMIR, as expanded in resolutions 918 (1994) and 925 (1994),

Noting the offer by Member States to cooperate with the Secretary-General towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the United Nations in Rwanda (S/1994/734), and stressing the strictly humanitarian character of this operation which shall be conducted in an impartial and neutral fashion, and shall not constitute an interposition force between the parties,

Welcoming the cooperation between the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and neighbouring States to bring peace to Rwanda,

Deeply concerned by the continuation of systematic and widespread killings of the civilian population in Rwanda,

Recognizing that the current situation in Rwanda constitutes a unique case which demands an urgent response by the international community,

Determining that the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda constitutes a threat to peace and security in the region,

1. Welcomes the Secretary-General's letter dated 19 June 1994 (S/1994/728) and agrees that a multinational operation may be set up for humanitarian purposes in Rwanda until UNAMIR is brought up to the necessary strength.

2. Welcomes also the offer by Member States (S/1994/734) to cooperate with the Secretary-General in order to achieve the objectives of the United Nations in Rwanda through the establishment of a temporary operation under national command and control aimed at contributing, in an impartial way, to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in Rwanda, on the understanding that the costs of implementing the offer will be borne by the Member States concerned;

3. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, authorizes the Member States cooperating with the Secretary-General to conduct the operation referred to in paragraph 2 above using all necessary means to achieve the humanitarian objectives set out in subparagraphs 4 (a) and (b) of resolution 925 (1994);

4. Decides that the mission of Member States cooperating with the Secretary-General will be limited to a period of two months following the adoption of the present resolution, unless the Secretary-General determines at an earlier date that the expanded UNAMIR is able to carry out its mandate.

5. Commends the offers already made by Member States of troops for the expanded UNAMIR.

6. Calls upon all Member States to respond urgently to the Secretary-General's request for resources, including logistical support, in order to enable expanded UNAMIR to fulfil its mandate effectively as soon as possible and requests the Secretary-General to identify and coordinate the supply of the essential equipment required by troops committed to the expanded UNAMIR.
7. Welcomes, in this respect, the offers already made by Member States of equipment for troop contributors to UNAMIR and calls on other Members to offer such support, including the possibility of comprehensive provision of equipment to specific troop contributors, to speed UNAMIR's expanded force deployment.
8. Requests Member States cooperating with the Secretary-General to coordinate closely with UNAMIR and also requests the Secretary-General to set up appropriate mechanisms to this end.
9. Demands that all parties to the conflict and others concerned immediately bring to an end all killings of civilian populations in areas under their control and allow Member States cooperating with the Secretary-General to implement fully the mission set forth in paragraph 3 above.
10. Requests the States concerned and the Secretary-General, as appropriate, to report to the Council on a regular basis, the first such report to be made no later than fifteen days after the adoption of this resolution, on the implementation of this operation and the progress made towards the fulfilment of the objectives referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 above.
11. Also requests the Secretary-General to report on the progress made towards completing the deployment of the expanded UNAMIR within the framework of the report due no later than 9 August 1994 under paragraph 17 of resolution 925 (1994), as well as on progress towards the resumption of the process of political settlement under the Arusha Peace Agreement.
12. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

The Belgian daily *Le Soir* reported that some 20 humanitarian organisations had disowned the French initiative. MSF was mentioned in the list.



'Rwanda: humanitarian organisations against French initiative', *Le Soir* (Belgium), 22 June 1994 (in French).

Extracts:

But it is particularly the hostility of the humanitarian organisations that poses a risk to 'Operation Turquoise'. Some twenty organisations, including Médecins du Monde, Pharmaciens Sans Frontières, Handicap International and MSF, have disowned the initiative and called the project "absolute madness", unlike Bernard Kouchner, who sees it as "a terrible, but necessary solution."

In the Belgian daily, *La Nouvelle Gazette*, the Director of Communications for MSF Belgium spoke against French intervention.



'MSF: "Better to do nothing than send in the French"', *La Nouvelle Gazette* (Belgium) 21 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

When asked whether French intervention was better than doing nothing, Doctor Pierre Harzé of MSF Belgium didn't hesitate: "I am convinced that doing nothing at all is better than French intervention!" He stressed that Médecins Sans Frontières France were of the same opinion. The organisation, infuriated by the French government's "humanitarian hijacking" of events, has called from the start for international intervention in Rwanda. But MSF believes that an intervention must be undertaken by countries that cannot be suspected of taking part in the conflict. This naturally excludes France, which is "completely disqualified", and whose sudden humanitarian zeal seems "extremely bizarre" to Doctor Harzé. "The French intervention is likely to be catastrophic", he said. "There are no two ways about it. We are all agreed." The fact is that real genocide is underway in Rwanda; this is a systematic search for Tutsi – men, women and children – on purely racial grounds, by Hutu militia fanatics. "I have never seen so many corpses," said Doctor Harzé, just back from Rwanda. So, what is to be done? "If there were any real political will, army contingents would arrive." But we can see what the situation is.

During an international meeting of Directors of Operations, representatives of MSF Belgium and MSF Spain asked for clarification of the MSF position on French intervention.



Minutes of MSF Operations meeting – Amsterdam, 22 June 1994 (in English).

Extract:

MSF Belgium: Pierrot Harzé told the RPF that MSF Belgium does not approve of the French intervention. So far, there have been no repercussions resulting from the French campaign, nor in Rwanda, nor in Benaco camp. MSF should make clear where it stands regarding the French intervention, also towards journalists.

MSF Spain: It was not clear that there was no direct connection between the MSF France campaign and the Government campaign, calling the Rwandan massacres 'genocide'. However, this public statement is supported by MSF Spain.

On 23 June 1994, MSF France told *Libération*: "UN intervention would have been preferable... but this is genocide and it must be stopped by any possible means."



'NGOs: France is not the ideal choice – Except for MSF...', *Libération* (France) 23 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Except for MSF, the humanitarian organisations – which have all been very critical of the role played by France in Rwanda – are against this intervention... In this chorus of reservation, the only soloist is Médecins Sans Frontières, which has deployed a hundred

staff on the ground, in the territories controlled by both camps. Last week MSF launched an appeal for “immediate armed intervention by the United Nations to protect the civilian population against the perpetrators of this genocide”. For MSF, “there is genocide in Rwanda, it is ongoing, and you can’t stop genocide with doctors”. Against this backdrop, the problem of who should intervene is only secondary. France is clearly not the ideal choice. UN intervention would undoubtedly have been preferable, but all that matters is that genocide is taking place, and it must be stopped by any possible means.

On 24 June 1994, MSF Belgium informed the press of the RPF forced evacuation of 35,000 civilians from the Gitarama-Butare area to the Bugesera area.



‘35,000 civilians evacuated following mounting tension south of Gitarama’, MSF Belgium **Press release**, 24 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Yesterday morning, mortar shells were fired on the Ruhango and Nyanza areas, south of Gitarama. Following these attacks, the RPF immediately decided to evacuate the displaced population to Nyamata in Bugesera. The evacuation is currently in hand and will continue in the coming hours and days.



We decided to head for Butare, and that’s where we began to see dozens, hundreds, and then thousands of people coming towards us. First, we told ourselves that it was just people fleeing. But little by little we realised that they as they won areas, they swept the people out. In appalling conditions. With no organisation at all and absolutely no assistance. People were literally dropping dead at the side of the road. They were exhausted from their forced march. It was total chaos. And we were in the middle of it and completely overwhelmed. We had set up two or three dispensary tents along the way. We tried at least to rehydrate people, which might not have been a good idea because the place we had been allotted was far from ideal. It was way too hot, there was very little water, and it was virtually impossible to get supplies. It was the first open, level area we found on the way. At some point this guy tapped me on the shoulder. It was the papal envoy, Cardinal Etchegarray; he took me aside and asked me, “What is going on here?” I told him, “We don’t really know what is going on, but it is awful.” Besides, I never really knew what it was about, what the rationale was, why, or how, etc. But it was plain to see that those people were being chased from their villages and sent to the rear with no means of subsistence.

Dr Pierre Harzé, MSF Belgium, Director of Communications, in Rwanda from 24 June to 8 July 1994 (in French).

The Board of MSF France confirmed its view that there was no alternative to armed intervention to put an end to the massacres, and that the legitimacy of the French intervention would be judged on its performance.



Minutes of the Board Meeting of MSF France, 24 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Philippe started the discussion with a report of events:

a) MSF France had begun to realise what was happening in Rwanda much later than MSF Belgium and MSF Holland. It was only when we attended the Belgian General Assembly that we grasped the situation. Other observers and the French press were also guilty of this delay, using expressions like 'ethnic conflict', against which we could do nothing...

b) MSF reacted by stepping up its efforts on the ground, and by writing an open letter to President Mitterrand (at a time when French political circles were beginning to wake up to what was happening). Although MSF was using the term 'genocide', it was 3 weeks before anyone spoke of a political conflict and a deliberate policy of extermination with hundreds of thousands killed and displaced. Despite the need to boost UN forces to a contingent of 5,500 and for a weapons embargo, nothing was done and no solution was adopted.

c) In the wake of the reports by our team in Kigali, a second public relations offensive was decided but delayed due to fears that it might endanger the MSF team on the ground and make the hospital a target. In the end an appeal to stop the genocide was made in the Friday edition of *Le Monde*. There were other individual initiatives with politicians in France and in the US, to try to secure decisions/actions. An association, 'Urgence Rwanda,' with all the NGOs on board (except MSF), was set up to launch a major solidarity push in France.

Everything happened at once and France intervened. Since then, there has been strong pressure from the press for MSF to comment on the deployment of French troops and to say what it thinks of other NGO standpoints, etc...

Philippe opened the debate, stressing that:

1. MSF had called for armed intervention and endorsed it, since "you cannot stop a genocide with doctors".

2. Although far from the ideal choice, France had been the only one to act to stop the massacre, and the legitimacy of France's intervention would be judged on its performance. During the discussion some people voiced fears that:

- issues such as responsibility and prosecution of those responsible would be sidelined.
- military action and humanitarian action would be blurred together.

Rony Brauman (former President of MSF France) said this organised butchery was unprecedented. It was the first time in 55 years that we could speak about real genocide. It was the third this century (after the Armenians and the Jews) and we were facing a fundamental, symbolic break in the system. It was vital to prioritise the problems and to have access to the media to shed light on the situation:

1. The top priority was to do whatever was needed to put a stop to it;

2. Then deal with the secondary priorities: impunity, French and European policy towards Africa.

There was, of course, no question of letting those responsible for the genocide go unpunished, but this was not the issue for today, as there was a risk of watering down the message. Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier confirmed that, faced with this new problem for MSF, we should act quickly to ask the right questions at the right time. There were 3 legal instruments in international humanitarian law:

- The Geneva Conventions
- The Convention on Genocide
- The Convention on Torture

It is the principle of universal jurisdiction that permits international action (obligation to secure justice extended to the international community) even though this system – largely unknown – has not been used since the Second World War. This is a turning point for MSF. It will be necessary to have a strong in-house position to enable us to fight over the long-term for a legal precedent, and to stay the course, not for moral reasons, but for operational reasons and for the sake of the victims. A Bosnian suit has been filed, as has a suit by Rwandan victims yesterday in Paris (based on the Geneva Conventions). Everyone thinks that there was no alternative to armed intervention to put an end to the massacres, but that we have to be vigilant in ensuring that the principles behind the intervention remained uppermost, and that the killers are prosecuted.

On 29 June 1994, at a Press conference, the French NGOs on the France-Rwanda Committee declared their opposition to Operation Turquoise, saying that it was making the situation even more complicated.



French intervention: NGOs reiterate their opposition', *L'Humanité* (France) 30 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

At a press conference, Médecins du Monde, Pharmaciens Sans Frontières, S.O.S Racism and other associations recalled the responsibility of the French government in the Rwandan crisis... "This French intervention makes the situation even more complicated. One of its first consequences has been to keep several NGOs from operating on the ground," said Fodé Sylla, opening the conference... The people do not endorse this intervention by the French. They are afraid that, once again, this is an excuse to come to the aid of those who are responsible for this cruelty... of those who used ethnic origin for political ends.

The French daily *Libération* reported on the differing attitudes of Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde towards the deployment of French troops.



'Call to arms by humanitarian organisations', *Libération* (France) 29 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde are calling for military intervention to put an end to the genocide in Rwanda... The two major doctor's organisations differ on the deployment of French troops. MSF refuses to question their intentions: it expects the soldiers to prove that they are not in cahoots with the militia and the FAR, that they are doing their job and protecting people who, according to MSF sources, have not requested humanitarian aid but rather 'armed dissuasive protection' in order to be able to live in safety. "If the deployment fulfils this task, then the soldiers' work will be legitimate," continued Philippe Biberson, "and the humanitarian organisations will be able to go about their business." The fear is, of course,

that any non-specific humanitarian intervention will only serve to strengthen the forces that control the enforced staging areas.

MSF Belgium was incensed at the international community's indifference to the genocide and launched an appeal for funds.



'MSF Belgium incensed', *La Wallonie* (Belgium) 30 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières was incensed, yesterday, at the international community's indifference to the genocide that continues to decimate the Rwandan people and launched an appeal for generosity and support. "The Rwandan crisis is not just another crisis, it is genocide. And the international community stands by and watches this butchery from the safety of the small screen. While we rightly and proudly commemorate the end of the Holocaust of the Second World War, the powerful of the planet have done little or nothing to stop the machetes from blindly slaughtering whole families, gashing the heads of children, cutting off the hands of babies," read an MSF statement. "Those of us on the ground (note: MSF has lost 500 of its Rwandan workers in the massacres; they were either killed or disappeared. Its teams work under bombardment and are exposed to the vengeance of the militia) who see what is happening are incensed. In Rwanda the situation is so catastrophic that the much-vaunted right of humanitarian intervention would have provided ample justification for doing everything possible to stop the horror. But we have to admit that, while we debate – two months down the track – the case for putting Rwanda on the Security Council agenda, only a few humanitarian and religious organisations are coming to the aid of the victims," noted MSF.

"Sir, Madam, they are trying to tell us that you, a Belgian and a European citizen, are not concerned. Nothing could be falsier. In supporting the dedicated work of the MSF teams that are fighting daily to save lives in Rwanda, you provide the best possible proof that there are still people here who can face up to the unacceptable. Help us to act now. Every gesture of solidarity, every donation – however small – is vital to the Rwandan people. Donations can be paid into the Médecins Sans Frontières post office account."

On 30 June 1994, in *Le Monde*, the former President of MSF France, Rony Brauman, said a humanitarian intervention could do nothing to alter the programme of extermination in Rwanda and that the priority was to stop the deadly machine.



'Humanitarian ethos versus duty of Humanity', Rony Brauman *Le Monde* (France) 30 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Before our very eyes, a part of humanity is being wiped from the world map. The programme of destruction and the organised butchery to which the extremist Hutu have devoted themselves in Rwanda will end in the disappearance of every last Tutsi and

Rwandan opponent. This is not just another misfortune to add to the sufferings of our unfortunate Humanity. It is sheer evil: genocide, a planned exercise in the destruction of human beings, exterminated simply because of whom they are. Initially the international reaction was simple and conventional: variations on the theme of inter-ethnic violence, evacuation of foreigners, appeals to stop the 'fighting', installation of a humanitarian system. With time and the increase in media pressure, the nature of the deadly process gradually became clear until reality dawned and a government – that of France – decided to act. Action in Rwanda today means using the army to put an end to the genocide. It means freeing the captive populations, hostages, before they are put to death. It means neutralising the armed groups at the vanguard of the slaughter. It means preparing to prosecute the torturers, because there can be no impunity for crimes of this magnitude, and because it is imperative to break this infernal circle of private reprisals.

The disgrace that France deserves for aiding the regime that is guilty of the carnage is one thing, and questions will have to be asked about why our country – which is so quick to invoke its attachment to human rights and humanitarian values – provided such staunch support for a dictatorship of this ilk. But at the moment the urgency lies elsewhere. We must stop this machine of death, even though it is late, even though it is difficult. Who would not prefer this to be a UN or NATO decision? Who would not rather see decisive intervention, untarnished by the suspicion of hidden motives? It is not food or medical convoys or humanitarian aid that will change anything in the programme of extermination that the extremist Hutu has embarked upon. And yet here we are in the second stage, hearing the humanitarian cacophony: "Intervention? Yes, of course, maybe, but not France, not like this, not now. Look at the declarations: everyone is hostile or wary. And look at our programmes, our volunteers, our work endangered by the arrival of French troops; the cure will be worse than the disease." In other words, pity Rwanda, but pity our projects, too! Less than ten years ago in Ethiopia we could see the devastation caused by this humanitarian whingeing, this blind pity that allowed the leaders in Addis Ababa to turn a solidarity movement into an auxiliary of its murderous deportation policy.

Today our tearful eyes – seemingly so attentive to human misfortune – once again appear unable to see the wood from the trees. Humanitarian action is turning upon itself, in this climax of violence, against the duty of humanity. The excuses, the political and moral quibbles and the lip service of one and all have considerably weakened the proposed French intervention and perhaps already sidetracked it from its objective.

Security Council Resolution 929, which did not deem it necessary to use the term 'genocide', eloquently illustrates this spirit of minimal action. We can only marvel at its audacity: "The situation in Rwanda constitutes a unique case," the supreme authority of the UN hides behind "the strictly humanitarian character of this operation which shall be conducted in an impartial and neutral fashion," to pitch, once again, victims and torturers against each other, and demand "that all parties to the conflict... bring to an end all killings." Are humanitarian efforts to be used once again as an excuse not to get involved? Are the torturers to be the interlocutors or the targets of the troops deployed in this operation? If our fundamental duty to do all we can to put an end to the genocide and to prosecute those responsible falls victim to hand wringing over the problems such intervention might raise, then our century, which started with a genocide in 1915 – that of the Armenians – will close as it opened, with infamy as its hallmark.

On 1 July 1994, the Board of MSF Belgium speculated about the RPF's reaction to Operation Turquoise, and about the relevance of the call for international armed intervention made by MSF France in mid-June.



Minutes of the Board meeting of MSF Belgium, 1 July 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The whole country is paranoid, and this has been intensified with the arrival of the French. The RPF has moved people out of Bugesera; their language seems suspiciously kind. The RPF seems to be afraid of Operation Turquoise (creation of an easily controlled no man's land and repopulation of Bugesera).

MSF has not yet intervened in the FAR zone; an attempted exploratory mission in Cyangugu has failed owing to reasons of safety; we need more people; other NGOs are in there, but MSF France is reluctant (pressure from the French government).

Regarding the genocide: MSF France has taken a clear 'anti-genocide' stance and declared its support for military intervention to stop the murder. The problem is that MSF France made a call to arms (thus setting a precedent for the association) and only the French army has intervened. The French option should have been subject to international debate, thus enabling us to redefine our international stance (humanism and MSF doctrines).

The events in Rwanda are so exceptional that it would seem legitimate for MSF to comment on them. But the MSF France position has been used by the media and politicians for their own benefit. Legal proceedings against the criminals could be considered, based on the accounts of MSF, among others. But we are not able to carry this through.



Our concern was not to be instrumentalised by people who wanted to intervene militarily... I heard a dozen times the complaint that "You called for Operation Turquoise." I would reply, "Did you ever hear us call for unilateral French military intervention to undertake humanitarian work? Where? Which document was that? Which of us made that declaration?" Confronted with all these fantasies, I referred them to dates, documents and declarations that were factual. After all, there was my interview on TF1 in May, and a recording of the event. They could listen to it again and hear what one of the MSF leaders was saying at the time. The text of the appeal had been published in Le Monde, so there could be no ambiguity. We paid for the half-page ad to ensure that we controlled the message in Le Monde. The wording of the Appeal, which we published of our own accord, called for anything but Operation Turquoise.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager, (in French).

On 1 July 1994, MSF Belgium informed the press of the poor conditions and lack of preparation for the displacement of thousands of people towards Bugesera ordered by the RPF.



Rwandan crisis – **Situation Report**, 28 June to 3 July (in French).

Extract:

Bugesera

Since 28 June the town of Ruhango has been empty, as has the hospital (800 patients), which was evacuated by RPF trucks and some MSF trucks. On 28 June, 60-80,000 people crossed the bridge. On Tuesday 29th, the camp in Kinavi (20,000 people) and the health centre accommodating 250 patients were evacuated; 100,000 people with cattle and luggage were reported to be en route for the bridge, with queues 25 km long. The hospital in Nyanza was then evacuated. Six MSF dispensary tents were set up at the bridge to accommodate and treat the patients who had been dumped there en masse by the trucks evacuating the hospital. Their condition is sometimes alarming, even desperate (dehydration, exhaustion) ... A dispensary with local staff is operational in Ruhuha. MSF is also seeing to the distribution of water (water tanks supplied by a 25,000-litre tanker shuttle service) and biscuits along the road and picking up exhausted people and taking them to the hospital in Rilima. This massive population displacement carried out in record time has claimed several victims... and one wonders whether the emergency evacuation was really warranted...

MSF was able to set to work in Rilima on 28 June: the MSF doctor in Nyamata and two MSF nurses started to receive patients. An agreement was made with the ICRC: MSF would have overall responsibility for the hospital in Rilima and the ICRC would provide medical back-up (two nurses) during the set-up phase. Thereafter, the ICRC would deal with food aid (general distribution). As for the local staff for the hospital, the ICRC will lend us their local staff (protected by the Geneva Conventions and therefore under ICRC protection); MSF attempted to benefit from this to renegotiate with the RPF, so that this staff could continue to enjoy the same status. In all, 1,400 sick and wounded people were hospitalised in Rilima. The remaining MSF teams accompanied the patient convoys between Ruhango and Rilima.

Relations with the RPF are still not good because the information channels – including between the various RPF bases – do not always seem efficient; this has led to various problems on the ground (escorts unavailable, delayed set-up in Rilima, lack of organised transport to get the wounded out of Ruhango); we discussed the situation in Byumba with Captain Denys and Dr Emile; in order to improve the lines of communication, a liaison officer will be sent on detachment from Byumba for MSF in Bugesera in the next few days; in addition, our Head of Mission has established a direct link with the RPF in Brussels...

D. Situation in the RPF zone.

More and more questions are being raised about the situation of the people in the RPF zone:

- We have already mentioned the forced displacements: clearly, these massive displacements cannot be easily justified on the basis of safety on the ground: Ruhango, Nyanza, Gitarama, Kinavi and Buyoga in the north were relatively calm zones when the RPF ordered the people to leave. Whatever the reasons the RPF had for these population shifts (supposedly for reasons of safety, but clearly to exercise control over these people), it is obvious that the people are moving against their will and, for the majority, to their personal and humanitarian detriment.
- The pressure exerted on these people by the RPF is increasingly clear; they are afraid, and our local staff has also been subjected to considerable pressure.
- Some displaced people in the Kinali camp said that some displaced Hutu had been singled out by the RPF, who then beat them to death.

- Multiple disappearances were revealed.
 - People are forced to work unpaid for the RPF, which hopes to gain control of the whole region.
 - The teams talk of 'communist-like' regimes, to put it mildly.
- Admittedly, MSF will have to take a stance on these issues in the next few days; but it is also clear that MSF is well-placed to report on events, as it is the only organisation working with the ICRC in the region.



'Rwanda: massive displacement of people towards Bugesera', MSF Belgium **Press release**, 1 July 1994 (in French).

Extract:

For five days there has been a massive exodus of people from Gitarama, Ruhango, Kabgayi, Nyanza and from the camps of displaced people in the region. The displaced are on the move towards Rilima in Bugesera, following orders from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Conditions are poor, and there has been no real preparation. Some people must walk 150 km before reaching their destination. Between 50,000 and 100,000 people have been affected. While it is impossible to estimate exactly how many will never make it, dehydration and dysentery are clearly having a devastating effect. Due to the large number of victims, the displaced have been authorised to stop by the roadside. 1,400 patients from the various hospitals of the region have also been evacuated towards Rilima. MSF teams are trying to cope with the humanitarian needs. Twenty expatriates are on the ground, backed by many Rwandans, to accommodate the displaced and the patients.

MSF Belgium HQ was kept informed of RPF activities, thanks to the Situation Report by the coordination team in Rwanda.



Situation Report - Rwanda No. 4, MSF Belgium, 7 July 1994 (in English).

Extract:

After the deployment of French troops in Rwanda, the atmosphere in RPF territory changed dramatically. The RPF prepared their defence lines and moved large numbers of people. The attitude towards NGOs became more aggressive [and] suspicious and the cooperation diminished day by day. Passports were checked. In the search for French nationals, and people were intimidated. I sent a French logistician back to Bujumbura upon arrival in Ruhango and another was sent to Kampala, exchanged for a Belgian national. Both evacuations were for security reasons. On 23 June, the RPF ordered the evacuation of the population in the zone between Gitarama and Butare, including all displaced, residents and relief workers. Everybody was directed to Nyamata and surroundings. We were asked to assist with the evacuation of hospital patients and orphans medical and logistical... The RPF attitude showed a general disinterest for the well-being of the population. Terms such as 'natural selection' and lines like 'nobody will die in your trucks, not even the worse' were used by military personnel. Our operation, although requested by the RPF, has not been supported by them.

In a report dated 9 July 1994, the MSF Belgium Coordinator in Rwanda summarised the incidents with the RPF. He discussed the role of MSF's action in the context of terror and intimidation that the troops instilled. Discussed at the Brussels office and forwarded to the other sections, this report elicited ambivalent reactions. It has not been made public.



'Summary of incidents with the RPF', **report** by MSF Belgium Coordinator in Rwanda, 9 July 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Evacuation of Ruhango, Nyanza and Kinazi:

Being asked by RPF doctor [E] to assist medical[ly] and logistical[ly] with the evacuation of the patients, orphans and population of the defence area of Ruhango and Nyanza, MSF Belgium moved all resources and personnel. We found the population being forced to move, without any assistance. The emergency situation was getting bigger and bigger each hour. Evaluating events after the operation was 'completed', I come to following conclusions.

- the population was moved into screening camps already before.
- They originated from Kigali, Gitarama and Kagbaya and have been displaced several times.
- MSF Belgium in Ruhango has been misinformed about the location of camps. Local staff informed us of major clusters which were not shown to us by RPF.
- The evacuation has been ordered due to different reasons, not security. First it was dangerous for the ICRC to stay, because the French were going to bomb them, according to RPF. Later they said that there was in fact no direct security problem to be expected, but they had to be ready. At what price!
- By ordering the people to start moving instantly, RPF knew that the death toll would be enormous. Trying to get international attention and a good name in the western world was probably one of the reasons why they asked us to show up and give assistance.
- The General attitude of the RPF was blunt and insensitive to the huge suffering of the people. They said things like: "we will make them suffer, because we suffer for their liberation" and "oh, you say this is a human catastrophe, we call this natural selection". Another interesting statement was made when we wanted to give soap to workers: "you should not pay the people. We are creating a society in which people will work without pay. If they don't work, we'll punish them."
- The stopping of our trucks at the border of Burundi was probably a planned action. By slowing us down, they could continue the dumping of patients, orphans and civilians at their own speed and without conscious white men around.
- By getting MSF to Rilima and forcing ICRC to move for the time being to the same place, they moved all health care to a small place in Bugesera. After this the stream of people towards Rilima was stopped so that the majority of the population stayed 65 km from the main concentration of relief. I asked to increase the number of displaced in the area, so that Rilima could be the provincial health centre. For the moment they have only moved 5,000 persons, out of 70,000 persons to Rilima. Is it planned that way? They know where only 30 000 persons are, by the way. 5 000 in Rilima and 25 000 in Ruhuha. Where are the rest?
- Access to Rilima has been denied for 3 days without any reason that I can think of. It looks like they did not want us to be ready for the reception of 'worthless' people. In the meantime, people were forced to stay at the bridge, while everybody knows that this place is an excellent spot to create disease, epidemics and suffering.

- The shortcut from Ruhuha to Nyamata/Rilima has been closed by RPF due to 'security reasons'. It forced the population to walk another 60 kilometres. Instead of facilitating the quick evacuation to the assigned area, people were ordered to stop, to walk again, to turn around again, making them running around in circles, with what cause in mind...???

- We saw big groups being turned back towards the bridge, and nobody wanted to answer the question why. My escort said: "they are coming back from the fields; they live at the bridge". They came from the field with mattresses on their heads??

- Trucks of MSF have been rerouted, delayed, arrested etc... Patients that were loaded in Ruhango/Kinazi have not all reached the hospital in Rilima. One truck was ordered to park at gunpoint. It arrived the next day with a load of dead or half dead patients. The driver [...] was shocked.

- Orphans that we were supposed to move where dumped at the bridge by the RPF and kept there for three days on purpose. Nobody was allowed to touch them (these are our children, don't touch them!) The access to Zaza was granted to the ICRC. When the trucks with 180 dead, sick, dehydrated, and malnourished children arrived in Rilima, access to Zaza was denied again, leaving a medical team waiting for the children in Zaza. Later they accused the ICRC of trying to play authority by arranging themselves what should happen to the children of the RPF state. They had unfortunately spoken to the wrong prefect, RPF military explained. These children were absolutely healthy when they were pictured by Roger Job in Ruhango. We sheltered them temporarily, fed them and hospitalised the sick ones. As we had no water, we could not do our medical job properly. They delayed our search for water for two days. As a last solution we went for lake water (to be heavily chlorinated) in order to save the lives of the 180 children. The day after, a certain Mr [H] arrived at the Rilima hospital and accused MSF of the following:

a) We are responsible for the bad nutritional status of the orphans. Why didn't MSF feed them?

b) The housing was below standard. Why did MSF not look for a better place?

c) We had not treated the children according to medical standards.

He said that I was personally responsible for the mistreatment. I told Mr [H] (RPF non-medical relief coordinator) that:

a) RPF was ripping them out of their orphanage before we could do it. RPF dumped them at the bridge and kept them there for three days without anything. We saw the children in good condition before in Ruhango. YOU brought them in this state.

b) The authorities have been asked to empty the cinema, but that was not possible. There were only 50 displaced in this cinema and I gave enough plastic sheeting to resettle them.

c) All sick are in the hospital, the malnourished in the feeding centre, the diarrhoea cases in the rehydration ward and the healthy ones are in front of you. Would you like to visit the other ones? Mr Henri said no. So I concluded by rejecting his insulting attempt to make us guilty for the lives of innocent children. He gave no comments...

My personal conclusions:

- RPF comes from Uganda, Burundi, and Zaire (Tutsi) and is not representing the majority of Rwandan Tutsi. They are not liberating the country but occupying it. Compared to the other side, which is even worse, they have all the sympathy they want. NGOs and governments are blind to the 'saviours'. "Please, give me a camp, please let us be on your side." Almost everybody accepts the dictate and fills in the forms the RPF presents them, accepts the system, the harassment, the planned extermination of certain parts of the population.

- The RPF has no majority support. They rule by gun and intimidation. I see a terrified population that obeys in order not to get shot. Nobody dares to open his mouth. Those who tried are dead now. They are planning to have and keep power. But they can only do by dictatorship and suppression. The new rule is that Hutu should not work...

- The cover, that they care for their population, is a perfect smoke screen for gaining support from the Western world. In fact they only care for those who are super pro RPF, intelligent, and needed for the future or for the war. Soldiers are well-fed, the political upper ten percent is in splendid condition, the rest can die.

- There is enough proof of mass violations of human rights, executions, and intimidation. This regime has nothing good in mind. If they tried to gain popular support, they would have more power and chance to rule for longer. Why are they not interested in popular support?

- NGO presence is seen as difficult. All those white people that ask stupid questions are only a burden. They try to control us, collect from us (more, more), spy on us and they try to block us from seeing something. Real interest for helping us to help them, is not existing. "Wait 5 days for your 15-minute meeting with me" ... That people starve doesn't interest them. All sayings, the official attitude, the field lack of cooperation, the planned movements of the civilians they rule... it all looks like an official line, a dogma. In September the rain will be here. Cholera around the corner. No harvesting means starvation next year. Why don't they let us do our job? Why let children die in a massacre field? Why move the people all the time, till they are so tired and sick that they fall dead in the ditch?

I think that this is a communist system based on the ideology of the Khmer Rouge. Move the people all the time and they will listen. Let them suffer, let their family die; nothing is easier to control than a weak and obeying population. RPF officials are extremely intelligent, have all the ins and outs planned. They have doctrines and guidelines for everything. They are ready for the press. They play the media game splendidly. They control and abuse the NGOs and they try to show to us that they are a good future with a human face for Rwanda.

Unfortunately, we (the relief workers) are the only ones to evaluate the situation because we work and live (some of the NGOs) in Rwanda. I see planned genocide appearing in front of my very eyes. Murder by planned starvation, by disease, nice and clean because they will look like the victims, the martyrs. I see a system that functions like the KGB. Spies around you 24 hours. Disappearances. Executions. Compilations of security files. No respect for human rights, no respect for NGO rules or ideologies. What conventions of Geneva? What 'no guns in the hospital'? The lies they throw over us are clearly recognisable because we see the truth. Most of the suffering in the RPF controlled zones has been created by RPF themselves.

According to me, MSF should end its activities and open up in mass media coverage. Curing created disease, regardless of present and future for those people we cure, is making us accomplices of the crime.

Questions that MSF will have to ask itself:

1. What do we want to achieve in Rwanda?
2. Do we accept the role of free of charge medicine supplier?
3. Do we accept that our rules of implementation are non-achievable? that we have no control over our projects?
4. Are we doing good to continue to support a regime that violates human rights systematically? Do we allow them to use the MSF flag for cover and as a smoke screen for what really is happening?

5. Are we going to respond to emergencies that are created by dictatorship and contribute to the media role that the dictator wants to gain?
6. Do we stand up for the rights of the masses, by project implementation or by project ending, or are we busy sustaining our own existence?
7. Do we continue this way, now that not one of the working conditions are reached?
8. Haben wir es nicht gewusst???



For me it is totally unclear. I understood that it was broadly discussed in Brussels, that there was a big polemic around the text I wrote which, of course, I didn't know at the time. Some of the things were facts like Dr Canissius being killed. But one of the general sentiments about this document was that 'the guy is overworked, he is not seeing things clearly and he has to be replaced as soon as possible, then we will have a good mission.' So, when Eric Goemaere came, he said: "That's the impression Brussels gave me. Yet I am seeing you and I am checking what you have written, I am checking what you have said and it's my opinion you are right." And after that nothing happened. I closed my mission, and I went back home.

P [...] MSF Belgium Coordinator in Byumba and Bugesera (Rwanda), May to September 1994 (in English).



I had fallen out with MSF at the time [Pierre left MSF a few months later]. I never saw that report. I just read a few paragraphs and not one jogs my memory. I have seen scores of reports. But I would remember that one if I had seen it. It's too bad that I never saw it, and it is strange that the coordinator never told me about it. There probably aren't too many people who have seen it. I do remember that the coordinator was a great guy, but he had some credibility problems. I can picture the scene: the coordinator arriving with the report and six other guys from headquarters saying, "He's nice but he gets on our nerves, he needs a rest." At MSF back then that's the end of the report. That's how things were. It might have happened like that. I really can't express an opinion on the context of the report because, out of context, it really doesn't mean all that much. By the time we got to Nyanza, I think that I had already seen the bodies of tens of thousands of genocide victims. We were seeing nothing but bodies. We were overwhelmed and felt powerless. We were walking a tightrope. When you land in a country, without support, and the two-bit lieutenant there, who isn't even a lieutenant but who is armed says, "That's it," well, that's it. I see here [reading from the report] that the coordinator is outraged because people went to the hospital with weapons. If I look back at the situation, even today, I say that's ridiculous. What's the problem? A hospital is no place for weapons, we all agree on that. But that's a rule you make when you can. It takes time. The coordinator uses the term 'Khmer Rouge'. That is a fear I shared; I already told you. But it was never confirmed, because I don't know of any other mass displacement inside a country after that. It wasn't institutionalised. There were camps, but the men in the camps had a lot to be nervous about. A good many of them had a lot of blood on their hands. And yet, the way the RPF was acting put me on my guard right away. And I sure wasn't inclined to let them get away with anything. But when you are in a hospital, surrounded by dying people, and someone shows up with a toothache, you send them packing. You automatically stand back, and that can be very dangerous. But it is also a way to protect yourself. It was just so incredible. There were piles of bodies! We didn't even stop if there was a body by the roadside. The RPF discovered the bodies when we did. The difference is that it was their families, and they were armed. If I were to exaggerate, I would say that they even showed some restraint! However, they did commit some atrocities. During the genocide, Butare hospital was

emptied of its patients, who were all killed. Then the RPF came and put two supposed culprits up against the wall. Executing them was an atrocity, too. Obviously, that's unforgivable, intolerable, but it was a particular situation.

Dr Pierre Harzé, MSF Belgium, Director of Communications, in Rwanda from 24 June to 8 July 1994 (in French).



That immediately reinforced the idea that the RPF was perhaps not entirely innocent, and that – at the very least – they were using strong-arm tactics. Now, we were amid war, it could have been part of the control of territory and things like that, but these were the very first reports against the RPF and we were scared because these weren't exactly nice guys we were dealing with.

Dr Eric Goemaere, MSF Belgium, General Director (in French).



In 1994, when MSF Belgium first sent a team through Uganda to the north of Rwanda, after evacuating Kigali and Butare, the first report on the social events came from a member of a team in Byumba, and basically said, "There is terror, my colleagues have disappeared, when I ask what's going on they tell me to keep quiet and then everyone says that they have been murdered." He described a situation of arbitrary arrests, summary executions, etc... He was very shocked by the repressive nature of what was going on there. He wrote to Brussels, sent a report, etc... No public stance was taken on this. But in any event, in September the Gersony report came out, and the [UN]HCR said that the RPF was carrying out massacres. So, it wasn't exactly new information either.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France, Rwanda Programme Manager (in French).

From 4 to 10 July 1994, an MSF International team carried out an exploratory mission in the Turquoise zone. They decided to take responsibility for three camps, coordinated by MSF France.



Rwandan crisis - Report on the situation from 4 to 10 July 1994) southwestern zone, Turquoise security zone (in French).

Extracts:

An MSF International exploratory mission took place this week, via Bukavu towards Gikongoro. It was unescorted and completely independent. The mission had been postponed for a few days following the attack on an MSF vehicle by an FAR helicopter in the RPF zone. The exploratory mission did not encounter any security problems and was able to establish working relationships with the civil and military authorities. A preliminary estimate put the number people in the north of the prefecture at between 300,000 and 500,000, whereas there was an estimated one million people in the south, people on the move (source = French army) ... MSF decided to intervene and take responsibility for the 3 camps... a 14-strong team was expected to be operational by the following week, coordinated by MSF France. The stocks already amassed by MSF Holland in Burundi

would be used to launch the operation. MSF Belgium provided non-Belgian volunteers, and sent an expert to examine at the food supply chain in the region...

At the beginning of July 1994, the Director of Communications at MSF Belgium, who had stayed with the MSF team in Rwanda during the RPF's ordered displacement towards Bugesera, published an assessment of Operation Turquoise in the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*. A few sentences show how difficult it was to tell about the new regime's violence in the post-genocide context.



'Unmasked', Pierre Harzé *Le Soir* (Belgium) 11 July 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Just a few days after its launch, 'Operation Turquoise' can be seen for what it always was in the minds of its proponents: a desperate attempt to save a faltering, bloody, but friendly extremist Hutu regime. In an extraordinarily bewildering exercise, the French government, obligingly supported by a national press that seems, for the moment, to have turned its back on any obligation for critical comment, has managed to throw a modest humanitarian veil over an intervention that quite clearly has other aims. Quite shamelessly yesterday's victims are being publicly demonised and painted as the murderers of tomorrow. At the risk of forcing the pace, I intend to highlight here some facts that I feel should be borne in mind for a composed rebuttal of the arguments used by those who are tempted to rewrite the Rwandan crisis.

1. The war in Rwanda is not a tribal war. It was originally an attempted takeover by force by the extremist faction of the ruling party. The operation had long been planned and prepared. In the hours following the assassination of President Habyarimana (6 April), it took the shape of a systematic, selective elimination of all moderate political opposition (Hutu were the first to fall victim to it). It was only in the second phase, backed up by an impeccably organised militia and racist propaganda that those behind the attempted coup d'état began to hunt down the Tutsi. The forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front were on the move.

2. The large-scale, systematic massacre of the Tutsi minority is genocide. All the characteristics are there, particularly the selection of victims based on their ethnic origin.

3. After looking on impassively for many long weeks, the international community painfully produced the first, belated UN Security Council Resolution (17 May). It envisaged sending various contingents to Rwanda, a total of 5,500 men. This resolution, accepted by the conflicting parties (in particular the RPF), has always remained a dead letter, with Western nations refusing to provide financial support to deploy the contingents suggested by various African countries.

4. At the beginning of June, the French government, which had gone to the aid of governmental forces back in 1990, decided to intervene. This decision was ratified by the Security Council but was widely disowned by many associations that doubted the 'humanitarian' intentions claimed by France, and suspected other, less acceptable motives (defence of the French language community, political, strategic, regional interests, etc.).

The genocide is largely complete. Several hundred potential victims, trapped in the zone controlled by governmental forces, have been placed under the protection of the French army.

5. The RPF has not – thus far, and until proven otherwise – been guilty of the systematic massacre of the civilian populations it is responsible for. This does not exclude the possibility of revenge attacks, nor does it mean that we should drop our guard, particularly given the recent population displacements in the areas taken by the RPF.

6. Following the advance of the RPF, 'Operation Turquoise' changed tack to become an operation to rescue governmental forces (4 July).

That said, this new military-humanitarian episode forced us – in our capacity as a humanitarian organisation – to think about at least two issues:

- Firstly, that it had once again been shown that true humanitarian action cannot be reduced to simply playing the rescuer. Its value is to be found in the intention behind the action. It is this intention that gives the action its full justification and which defines its nature. If the intention is not wholly objective, then the action cannot be qualified as humanitarian.

Let us not, then, be misled by apparent similarities in the actions, but rather question the intention behind them. Let us not be taken in by this lamentable trend that increasingly induces our governments to cloak old-fashioned interventionism in humanitarian rhetoric.

- Secondly, it is more than ever essential that NGOs keep their distance and maintain the power of decision regarding 'military-humanitarian' intervention.



Pierrot Harzé came back saying: "The supposed liberators are using methods that are hard to endorse" and he wrote a couple of articles in the press where, for the first time, the term "Black Khmers", appeared in connection with the RPF. It came out in the major newspapers in Brussels, in Le Soir. But people do not pay too much attention to that sort of claim until it's been confirmed. That didn't happen, and it was consigned to history. The press didn't seize upon it, as there were huge reserves of sympathy for the RPF. In the end, we let it drop.

Dr Eric Goemaere, MSF Belgium, General Director (in French).



I didn't hear about any article in Le Soir. But I was in contact with Pierre later and I had a very short interview with Colette Braeckman by phone. I am not a French speaker so it's difficult for me to speak to the French press in Brussels. I think she had read what I had written. I guess that MSF Belgium gave her my report. To be frank, everything that happens with this report since it was sent to Brussels... I don't know. I am totally blank.

P [...] MSF Belgium Coordinator in Byumba and Bugesera (Rwanda), May to September 1994 (in English).

In the summer 1994 edition of MSF Belgium's in-house magazine, the General Director of MSF Belgium described his visit a few weeks earlier to the RPF zone of Rwanda and questioned MSF's protection mandate.



'Explosive situation: a new mandate?' Eric Goemaere, **Contact** (MSF Belgium in-house magazine) No. 29 (July-August 1994) (in French).

Extract:

In Bugesera, 100,000 people and the wounded from two hospitals, forcibly removed in the space of 48 hours, are congregating in hostile marshland... Everywhere there are the same arguments to justify the lack of safety, the militia on the prowl, including in the camps. Everywhere the same terrified glances, the refusal to speak out, except to talk in secret of the massacres in April, the disappearances and summary executions of yesterday. Genocide had undeniably taken place. We have condemned it and we will continue to do so. But how far can we accept a situation in which yesterday's victims become torturers? ... And how can we keep our humanitarian work from being an accessory to the fact, as denounced by [the coordinator] and all the team, who were ready to leave? ... Never have I encountered such a tense atmosphere, such a polarised society, with its mixture of hatred and terror. Casualties disappear from our hospitals almost on a nightly basis, and the medical staff is regularly intimidated. The doctor who runs the hospital in Byumba, our main contact on the ground, disappeared one day... they say he's dead, that he was executed along with his wife and three children. There is great unease among the teams. Protection isn't part of our mandate, eh? ... Basically, a protection mandate calls for procedures, vigilance, and often tough action when dealing with disappearances. This lack of clear procedure and instructions means we make mistakes which sometimes turn into a crisis, like the case of the two-armed guards, accompanying us for security reasons, who jumped out of the MSF car to kill two passers-by who were walking in a 'suspicious' fashion... There is an urgent medical need to repatriate the refugees and to get them out of the death camps... but what level of risk can we tolerate before involving these hundreds of thousands of sick and starving people in what can only be another manipulation of their distress?

In September 1994, the MSF Belgium coordinator in Rwanda gave Dutch Minister for Cooperation and Development, Jan Pronk a more detailed version of his initial report, written in Dutch.



'Rwanda - Achter de schermen van het RPF' (Rwanda – Behind the screen of RPF) a [...] report, 27 September 1994 - **cover and summary** (in Dutch).



I met minister Jan Pronk when I was in Kampala, with Jacques de Milliano (President of MSF Holland). He asked me: "what are you doing?" I told him, "Oh, I just came back from Rwanda, and I am waiting for my director general to brief him on events that are not very nice. I understood from my mother that you have been stating things in the press in Holland. It gives me the idea that you don't know everything and there is a lot I want to tell you." He wanted to know everything, and I told him everything I knew. He said: "Why don't you write this down for me?" I said: "I will, but not now. I will write this down for you as soon as I am back in Holland as soon as I have ended my pool d'urgence contract with MSF Belgium because I cannot compromise the people in the field by giving you politicians a statement on human rights in a mission where my mandate is strictly medical. I will come to The Hague and bring it to you." That was the deal. So, in September, when I came back, I wrote this report which is the Dutch version. It is more specific on some things than the English version. I wor-

ked six weeks on it. This report, 'Rwanda behind the screens of the RPF: report of 90 days emergency health with MSF Belgium' was the basis for Jan Pronk's intervention to Rwanda and his discussion with RPF. It was very much an influential time because they were holding donor conferences. The leaders were going into talks with the new government assess to how people could return, the human rights situation, what to do with the prisons, how to build a judiciary again. And Jan Pronk was one of the main contributors to the new government, trying to find ways to get the message across. One part of the Dutch message was that we were aware that things were going wrong. Although they did not have enough prison capacity, police, or judges, they should not start having this popular tribunal in which people are executed behind the barracks. We were aware of a so-called purification process. People were coming back either from Congo or from inside the country and you only had to point your finger at somebody and say: "I saw him kill my neighbour" and he would immediately be killed. Jan Pronk took his decision to go forward and invest in this government, a high-risk investment, knowing that he had very little influence, so it was better to be on board, to talk to them instead of ignoring them... MSF Belgium was informed of my giving the report to Jan Pronk. I shared it with them. They never made any objection. I brought it out in my own name. The first page stated that this is my personal view on things and that it can never be the absolute truth. But I am willing to give people information so that they can judge how things happened, to judge what I had reported or what people had reported to me – to do something with the burden on my shoulders which was out of the medical mandate. The Flemish people in the office had the Dutch version of this report. Many people in MSF Brussels had it.

P [...] MSF Belgium Coordinator in Byumba and Bugesera (Rwanda), May to September 1994 (in English).

CHRONOLOGY

1892-1994

The main purpose of this chronology is to help the reader by reconstructing MSF's actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period. It is intended as a tool for this specific document, and not as an academic reference.

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1892		First European explorer in Rwanda.	
1923		AUGUST 31 Council of the League of Nations awards mandate over Ruanda-Urundi to Belgium.	
1959		AUGUST-SEPTEMBER Creation of the first political parties in Rwanda. NOVEMBER Hutu peasant riots: attacks on Tutsis - Thousands of Tutsis escape to neighbouring countries.	
1961		New wave of violence, tens of thousands of Tutsis flee. JANUARY 28 Republic proclaimed in Rwanda.	
1962		Proclamation of independence of Rwanda and Burundi - Grégoire Kayibanda (Hutu) appointed President.	
1963		DECEMBER Attack by Tutsi guerrillas - Thousands killed following reprisals against Tutsi within Rwanda - Number of refugees estimated at 300,000.	
1967		Tutsi massacre in Rwanda.	
1972		Tutsi barred from the administration in Rwanda.	
1973		Tutsi barred from schools and the National University in Butare - Tutsi massacres followed by a major exodus - Coup d'état - Major Juvénal Habyarimana seizes power.	

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1975		JULY 18 France and Rwanda sign military aid agreements.	
1978		DECEMBER 24 Election of the only candidate, Juvénal Habyarimana, to the Presidency of the Republic. Government mostly made up of Hutu.	
1983		Re-election of Juvénal Habyarimana with 99.98% of the vote.	
1986		The Rwandan government announces that Rwandan refugees abroad will not be allowed to return, since the country is not big enough to accommodate them. An estimated 600,000 Tutsi refugees live in neighbouring countries. Considerable dispersion in Western countries.	
1988		FEBRUARY Creation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in Uganda. DECEMBER Re-election of Juvénal Habyarimana to the Presidency of the Republic with more than 90% of the vote. Government mostly made up of Hutu.	
1990		OCTOBER RPF offensive halted by the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) with the help of Belgian, Zairean and French troops - Launch of Noroit, the French military aid operation, that would end in December 1993 - Arrest of thousands of opponents and people of Tutsi origin in Kigali - Massacre of 300 Tutsi in Kibilira.	
1991		Massacre of Tutsi and opponents in the prefectures of Ruhengeri, Gisenyi, Kibuye and Byumba.	

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1992		<p>MARCH State of siege and wave of Tutsi massacres in Bugesera.</p> <p>APRIL 40,000 displaced people; launch of the WFP emergency food aid programme.</p> <p>APRIL 16 Transitional government formed with significant opposition membership.</p> <p>JULY-AUGUST Arusha negotiations between the government and the RPF under the aegis of the OAU - Ceasefire.</p> <p>NOVEMBER Escalation of extremist Hutu militia violence - Demonstrations by opponents of the regime.</p>	<p>APRIL Short MSF Belgium mission in the Ruhengeri area - MSF Holland withdrawal from camps east and west of Byumba.</p>
1993	<p>DECEMBER American troops disembark in Somalia as part of the Restore Hope humanitarian operation.</p>	<p>JANUARY Broader-based transitional government negotiated at Arusha.</p> <p>JANUARY 20-22 Tutsi and opponents massacred in the prefectures of Ruhengeri, Gisenyi, Kibuye and Byumba.</p> <p>FEBRUARY RPF offensive reaches outskirts of Kigali and is beaten back with the help of French troops.</p>	<p>FEBRUARY MSF Holland present in the camps in Murumbi (East Byumba) and North Kigali (West Byumba) - MSF Belgium present in the camps and towns of Ruhengeri Prefecture.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1993	<p>MARCH France suggests UN Security Council sets up a peacekeeping mission in Rwanda - Publication of a report compiled by Human Rights Watch and the International Human Rights Federation showing that 2,000 Tutsi had been massacred since 1990.</p> <p>APRIL UNHCR special rapporteur on illegal, summary, or arbitrary executions visits Rwanda.</p> <p>MAY UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reports to Security Council and recommends setting up a UN observation mission on the border between Rwanda and Uganda.</p> <p>JUNE 23 Pakistani UN peacekeepers murdered in Somalia.</p> <p>AUGUST UNHCR special rapporteur on illegal, summary, or arbitrary executions, publishes conclusions: the Tutsi massacres since 1990 constitute genocide within the scope of the 1948 Convention.</p>	<p>JULY Agathe Uwilingiyimana appointed Prime Minister of the new Rwandan Government.</p> <p>AUGUST 4 Arusha peace agreements between the RPF and the government, providing for ceasefire, transitional government, merger of the two armies and establishment of a 'weapons-free zone' in Kigali.</p> <p>SEPTEMBER Establishment of Mille Collines Radio/TV service, controlled by extremist Hutu.</p>	

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1993	<p>OCTOBER UN Security Council Resolution 872 establishes assistance mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).</p> <p>DECEMBER French Noroit military detachment 'leaves for Kigali.</p>	<p>OCTOBER Assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, Hutu, the first democratically elected president of Burundi, by factions of Tutsi-dominated army; the various massacres leave 100,000 dead, and cause the exodus of 700,000 people, of whom 500,000 arrive in Rwanda.</p> <p>DECEMBER 28 600 soldiers and representatives of the RPF arrive in Kigali as part of the Arusha agreements.</p>	<p>OCTOBER Thousands die of shigellosis and hunger in the refugee camps - MSF Holland and MSF Belgium intervene in the camps in Butare Prefecture - MSF France in the southeast.</p> <p>DECEMBER MSF publicly denounces the weakness, irregularity, and poor quality of WFP's food deliveries to Burundian refugees in Rwanda.</p>
1994	<p>JANUARY Rwanda becomes non-permanent member of the UN Security Council - General Dallaire informs the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations of a plan to exterminate the Tutsi - Human Rights Watch publishes its report on 'Arming Rwanda', revealing the Habyarimana regime's massive rearmament policy.</p> <p>FEBRUARY General Dallaire tells the UN that the situation has deteriorated, weapons are being distributed and hit lists held by the death squads, and he calls for reinforcements.</p> <p>APRIL 4 UN Security Council Resolution 909 renews UNAMIR mandate and threatens to withdraw within 6 weeks unless the Arusha agreements are implemented.</p>	<p>JANUARY 5 Inauguration of President Juvénal Habyarimana - Establishment of broad-based government and new assembly delayed - Violent demonstrations by the Interahamwe (extremist Hutu militia) in Kigali.</p> <p>FEBRUARY 21 Assassination of minister Félicien Gatabazi; in reprisal, Martin Bucyana, president of the extremist Hutu party CDR is lynched.</p> <p>FEBRUARY 23 Establishment of transitional government and national coalition assembly comprising President Habyarimana and 15 Deputies delayed sine die.</p>	<p>FEBRUARY Emergency action plan set up by humanitarian organisations in Kigali, including MSF and ICRC - Significant improvement in quality and quantity of food supplies in the camps - Death rate falls.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>APRIL 9 Arrival of French parachutists who evacuate foreign nationals and members of the Habyarimana family.</p>	<p>APRIL 6 8 :15 pm - A plane carrying President Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Ntaryamira of Burundi and other members of the two governments is shot down on its approach to Kigali airport. - In the following hour, the Presidential Guard in Kigali sets up barricades.</p> <p>APRIL 7 - Start of massacre of political opponents, as well as Hutu in favour of power-sharing and Tutsi - kidnapping, torture and murder of 10 Belgian UN peacekeepers in a Rwandan army barracks; Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana murdered - Kigali under control of presidential guard, thus paralysing UNAMIR. - FPR troops heading to Kigali.</p> <p>APRIL 8 Systematic pillage, rape, and massacre of Tutsi by the Interahamwe in Kigali - Formation of interim government by former parliamentary spokesperson Théodore Sindikubwabo, who declares himself President.</p>	<p>APRIL 7 MSF Belgium volunteers withdraw from refugee camps to Kigali - MSF Holland team witnesses massacres in Murambi.</p> <p>APRIL 8 MSF France volunteers evacuate from refugee camps in the south of the country to Burundi, Tanzania and Kigali - Rwandan authorities refuse to allow national MSF staff of Tutsi origin to leave for Burundi - MSF Holland and MSF Belgium volunteers evacuated from Butare and replaced by new team - MSF team tries to treat the wounded in the streets and at Kigali hospital - MSF France and MSF United Kingdom Press release: 'MSF surgical teams ready to leave for Kigali'.</p> <p>APRIL 9 At the Kigali Hospital Complex, MSF volunteers find the bodies of their patients who have been killed during the night. In Murambi, the MSF Holland team sees Tutsi who have taken refuge in the orphanage, taken out and slaughtered. Press release: 'MSF aids the wounded in Kigali hospital'.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>APRIL 11 General Dallaire obtains ceasefire to facilitate evacuation of expatriates.</p> <p>APRIL 14 Evacuation of the last foreign nationals - and departure of French soldiers - Withdrawal of Belgian UNAMIR troops announced.</p>	<p>APRIL 10 Corpses in the streets of Kigali start to be collected.</p> <p>APRIL 12 Rwandan Defence Minister speaks on Radio Mille Collines calling for the Tutsi to be eliminated.</p>	<p>APRIL 10 MSF France and then MSF Holland volunteers are evacuated from Kigali by French troops. The MSF Belgium volunteers with Belgian nationality take refuge under Blue Helmet protection in a UN store at the Kigali airport.</p> <p>APRIL 11 - An MSF surgical team arrives from Nairobi and is blocked at Kigali airport - MSF Belgium Press release: 'MSF – situation report on aid operations in Rwanda'</p> <p>APRIL 12 The MSF Belgium surgical team blocked at Kigali airport is evacuated to Nairobi - Reports to the press - The only humanitarian workers left in Kigali are the 26 Swiss ICRC members.</p> <p>APRIL 13 An MSF France surgical team arrives in Kigali from Bujumbura, in an ICRC convoy - MSF and ICRC teams start to work under the same flag in a field hospital - The MSF Holland coordinator in Goma, Zaire, informs MSF Holland HQ in Amsterdam of the systematic persecution of the Tutsi.</p> <p>APRIL 15 The MSF Holland team in Goma, Zaire, aids a group of 3,000 refugees of Tutsi origin fleeing the massacres in Rwanda - MSF Belgium Press release: 'Situation report on MSF activities' - An MSF volunteer speaks on Sky News, the BBC and CNN.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>APRIL 16 UNAMIR called into question at Security Council.</p> <p>APRIL 17 Start of French humanitarian counteroffensive in the media, with the much-publicised return of former Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Bernard Kouchner.</p> <p>APRIL 20 Last Belgian peacekeepers leave Kigali.</p> <p>APRIL 22 UN Security Council adopts Resolution 912, reducing peacekeeper presence to 270.</p>	<p>APRIL 17 Massacres intensify in Gikongoro and on the outskirts of Butare.</p> <p>APRIL 18 The Prefect of Kigali coordinates the 'Tutsi manhunt'.</p> <p>APRIL 19 Butare seized by presidential guard - Prefect deposed and murdered.</p> <p>APRIL 22 250,000 Rwandan Hutu, pursued by the administrative authorities and local militia from their own towns, cross the border and take refuge near Ngara in Tanzania.</p>	<p>APRIL 16 MSF Belgium and MSF Holland volunteers witness from afar a massacre in Kibeho.</p> <p>MID-APRIL MSF Belgium and MSF France programmes open to Burundi 'repatriates' and Rwandan refugees in Burundi - Reports start to be gathered from MSF volunteers back from Rwanda.</p> <p>APRIL 20 A crowd armed with machetes stops Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium Medical Coordinator in Butare, from entering the Saga 1 and Saga 2 camps, and from evacuating MSF local staff - MSF Belgium Press release: 'Violence in Rwanda: hundreds of wounded reach Burundi'.</p> <p>APRIL 21 A Zairean employee tells the MSF Belgium team in Butare that soldiers forced local Hutu staff to kill their Tutsi colleagues.</p> <p>APRIL 22 MSF France and MSF Holland Press release: 'While the United Nations pull out of the country, the Rwandan people risk being forgotten.'</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>APRIL 27 At a general audience, Pope John Paul II calls on “those responsible to work generously and efficiently to put a stop to this genocide.”</p> <p>APRIL 28 Oxfam Press release refers to the massacres in Rwanda as ‘genocide’.</p> <p>APRIL 30 Massacres condemned by the UN Security Council, but 4 states, including the US and the UK, refuse to include the term ‘genocide’ in the Resolution. Boutros Boutros-Ghali calls in vain for the Security Council to “act forcefully” to “put an end to the massacres” and questions the wisdom of the reduction in UNAMIR manpower.</p>	<p>APRIL 23 Violent combat in the north of the country (Byumba and Ruhengeri).</p> <p>APRIL 27 Violent combat resumes in Kigali.</p>	<p>APRIL 22 AND 23 - 150 Butare hospital patients and five MSF local staff are murdered in front of MSF Belgium/Holland team. - Interview with Wouter van Empelen, MSF Holland emergency cell, in Dutch press.</p> <p>APRIL 24 MSF Belgium and MSF Holland teams evacuated from Butare to Burundi: manhunts on the road and dead bodies in Akagera - The teams contact the press in Bujumbura: request for creation of ‘humanitarian corridors’.</p> <p>APRIL 26 MSF Belgium delivers the report by the Butare team to Colin Keating, New Zealand ambassador to the UN and temporary president of the Security Council.</p> <p>APRIL 28 MSF Belgium Press conference: Reginald Moreels, the President, says the events in Rwanda amount to genocide - article by Reginald Moreels in <i>De Morgen</i> stating that the events in Rwanda are ‘genocide.’</p> <p>APRIL 30 MSF France General Assembly. The outgoing president Rony Brauman speaks of “pogroms on an industrial, mechanical scale, carried out with grenades and machetes, programmed and implemented by well-identified groups”, and points the finger at France.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>MAY 4 French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé calls on the United Nations to give UNAMIR more troops. - In an interview on ABC News Nightline, Boutros-Ghali affirms that “genocide” is taking place in Rwanda.</p> <p>MAY 5 President Bill Clinton: the US will only provide military and financial aid for a multilateral operation if it is “in America’s national interest”. - Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni accuses the Rwandan interim government of genocide.</p>	<p>MAY 1 RPF closes the Tanzanian border and forces the FAR to retreat westwards.</p> <p>MAY 3 Targeted massacre in Kigali.</p> <p>MAY 4 ‘Battle of Kigali’ starts - threat of widespread famine in Tanzanian camps.</p> <p>MAY 5 Clashes continue in Kigali.</p>	<p>MAY 2 MSF teams look after Rwandan refugees at Benaco in Tanzania.</p> <p>MAY 4 MSF United Kingdom Press release: “489,000 have fled Rwanda as massacres continue – MSF triples assistance to refugees this week” - MSF France Press release: “MSF send special plane to Tanzania to assist Rwandan refugees” - MSF Belgium programme opens on Byumba.</p> <p>MAY 6 Article by Reginald Moreels (MSF Belgium President) published on 28 April in De Morgen is reprinted in <i>Le Soir</i>.</p> <p>MAY 7 AND 8 MSF Belgium General Assembly: state of shock following genocide of Rwandan Tutsi.</p> <p>MAY 9 - last outing of ICRC/MSF France volunteers to gather up the wounded in Kigali - MSF United Kingdom letter to <i>The Guardian</i> rejects confusion between MSF and the right to intervene.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>MAY 11 Alison Des Forges of Human Rights Watch Africa publishes an opinion piece entitled 'Genocide: It's a Fact in Rwanda' in the <i>New York Times</i>.</p> <p>MAY 15 French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé uses the term 'genocide' when speaking to the press after a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the European Union.</p> <p>MAY 17 Security Council Resolution 918 expresses "once again its alarm at continuing reports of systematic, widespread and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law in Rwanda" [...] recalls "in this context that the killing of members of an ethnic group with the intention of destroying such a group, in whole or in part, constitutes a crime punishable under international law." The resolution demands that all parties to the conflict immediately cease hostilities, agree to a cease-fire, and bring an end to the mindless violence and carnage engulfing Rwanda."</p>		<p>MAY 11 MSF Belgium Press release: 'Rwanda emergency: MSF continues its work.'</p> <p>MAY 13 MSF France Press release: 'Almost 100 MSF staff murdered in Rwanda.'</p> <p>MAY 16 Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol (MSF France Programme Manager) tells TF1 (French TV) news of the "planned extermination" and criticises French support for the Habyarimana regime.</p> <p>MAY 17 MSF United Kingdom Press release: 'UN reinforcement in Rwanda may come too late.'</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>MAY 18 French Foreign Affairs Minister Alain Juppé uses once again the term 'genocide' in a reply to a current affairs question at the French National Assembly and suggests a summit of Heads of State for Rwanda's neighbouring countries.</p> <p>MAY 23 Eight African countries say they are prepared to take part in UNAMIR II - In London, Amnesty International publishes a dossier of massacres committed by "government supporters and regular troops" and cites "the deliberate and arbitrary murders committed by the RPF and its supporters."</p> <p>MAY 24 AND 25 Third extraordinary session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva: appointment of a special rapporteur, René Degni-Segui (Ivory Coast), tasked with conducting an inquiry into the existence of any 'genocide'.</p>	<p>MAY 19 RPF bombs the Kigali Hospital Complex, while the FAR bombs the UN HQ in the RPF zone.</p> <p>MAY 22 Kigali airport taken by the RPF.</p>	<p>MAY 18 MSF France publishes open letter to President François Mitterrand in <i>Le Monde</i>, asking him to intervene "against the planned, systematic extermination of the opponents of a faction supported by France" - Article by Alain Destexhe, Secretary-General of MSF International in <i>The New York Times</i>: 'Rwandans die while the U.N. procrastinates', which describes the events in Rwanda as genocide.</p> <p>MAY 19 MSF France Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol and Dr Philippe Biberson call on those in charge of the French presidency's Africa Unit to persuade their Rwandan 'friends' to stop the massacres.</p> <p>MAY 23 Organisation of joint-compilation of volunteer accounts by all MSF sections.</p> <p>MAY 24 Dr Rony Zachariah, MSF Belgium coordinator in Butare, tells the UN Human Rights Commission of the targeted massacres he has witnessed.</p> <p>MAY 25 The ICRC hospital in Kigali is shelled: 3 members of the Rwandan medical staff killed.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>MAY 27 Boutros-Ghali refers to the 'scandalous failure' of the Member States in their reluctance to commit troops, and to the continuing genocide.</p> <p>JUNE 8 UN Security Council Resolution 925 admits that 'acts of genocide' have been committed in Rwanda.</p>	<p>MAY 29 Nyanza taken by the RPF.</p>	<p>MAY 26 Armed militia force their way into the ICRC hospital in Kigali.</p> <p>MAY 29 MSF Belgium/Holland joint team sets up at Faisal Hospital in Kigali.</p> <p>EARLY JUNE MSF hands its document 'Genocide in Rwanda – eyewitness accounts' over to the UN Human Rights Commission – MSF exploratory mission in Cyangugu in the FAR zone not followed up as the authorities cannot provide safety guarantees.</p> <p>JUNE 2 AND 3 At a seminar, MSF France management team decides to launch an appeal for international armed intervention to halt the genocide.</p> <p>JUNE 3 MSF Belgium Press release: 'MSF launches a mission in Nyamata in Bugesera.'</p> <p>JUNE 7 MSF France Board confirms decision to launch an appeal for international armed intervention - MSF Belgium Press release: 'MSF sends reinforcements to Kigali.'</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>JUNE 12 OAU condemns 'crimes against humanity' in Rwanda.</p> <p>JUNE 15 French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé says France is ready to intervene with its African and European partners in Rwanda to 'protect those groups threatened with extermination' - The appeal 'Let's not let hunger finish off the genocide' is published in French daily <i>Libération</i> by the following French organisations: Médecins du Monde, Pharmaciens Sans Frontières, Handicap International, Atlas Logistique, Citoyens Solidaires, SOS Racisme.</p> <p>JUNE 17 Boutros-Ghali declares his support for the French initiative.</p>	<p>JUNE 14 Gitarama taken by the RPF - Interim government flees towards Kibuye and Gisenyi.</p>	<p>JUNE 10 MSF France Press release: 'Massacres continue in Kigali.'</p> <p>JUNE 14 MSF France leaders visit the French President who calls the Habyarimana regime a 'bunch of assassins' and announces French intervention.</p> <p>JUNE 15 MSF France Press release: 'In order to save those lives that can still be saved, and with genocide still ongoing, Médecins Sans Frontières is launching an urgent appeal for hostilities to cease and for immediate UN intervention.' - MSF international meeting in Paris: MSF Holland concerned about the possible negative impact of MSF France going public on its new project in Butare.</p> <p>JUNE 16 MSF France President and Director of Operations tell the ICRC Director of Operations that MSF is about to go public - MSF USA Press release announcing an MSF appeal for immediate intervention to put an end to the genocide.</p> <p>JUNE 17 MSF France Press conference: call for international armed intervention; Benaco camp described as a "humanitarian façade" and a "sanctuary for those responsible for the genocide" - MSF France Programme Manager in the USA: interview with the press and meeting with American authorities.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>JUNE 18 France announces its intention to address the UN Security Council regarding a “targeted military intervention for humanitarian ends in Rwanda, code-named Operation Turquoise, with or without the support of other countries.”</p> <p>JUNE 22 The Security Council adopts Resolution 929 authorising France and any other countries that might take part in the humanitarian operation in Rwanda to use “all necessary means for a period of two months”, while waiting for UNAMIR II to be set up, in order to protect civilians and ensure distribution of food aid, in accordance with Chapter 7 of the UN Charter: ‘Protection of civilians and humanitarian aid.’</p> <p>JUNE 23 Start of Operation Turquoise, scheduled to last 2 months - 2,500 soldiers in place in Goma and Bukavu.</p>	<p>JUNE 23 RPF forcibly evacuates between 70,000 and 100,000 people from Ruhango and Nyanza to Nyamata and Rilima.</p>	<p>JUNE 18 Publication by MSF France calls for armed intervention to put a stop to the genocide: “You can’t stop genocide with doctors” in <i>Le Monde</i> (18 June edition, on sale from 1 pm the day before).</p> <p>JUNE 20 Letter from Dr Philippe Biberson (MSF France President) to the Secretary-General of the RPF stressing that MSF had made two calls for intervention to halt the genocide, but not for isolated intervention by a particular government.</p> <p>JUNE 22 MSF International meeting: sections’ request for clarification regarding MSF position on French intervention - French NGOs (except MSF) react negatively to French intervention - MSF Belgium in Belgian press: ‘Better nothing than the French.’</p> <p>JUNE 23 RPA soldiers hinder MSF Belgium and ICRC medical back-up for the forced evacuation ordered by the RPF.</p> <p>JUNE 24 MSF Belgium Press release: ‘3,500 civilians evacuated following increased tension south of Gitarama’ - MSF France board reiterates its view that there is no alternative to armed intervention.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>JUNE 28 Back from a mission in Rwanda, UN Human Rights Commission rapporteur René Degni-Segui confirms that the term genocide can be applied to the Tutsi massacres and calls for the establishment of an international criminal court.</p> <p>JULY 1 Security Council adopts Resolution 935 calling for a committee of impartial experts to examine and analyse evidence of “possible acts of genocide”.</p> <p>JULY 3 The UN Secretary-General authorises France to create a “secure humanitarian zone”, comprising 20% of Rwandan territory in the south-west of the country (Cyangugu, Gikongoro, Kibuye).</p>	<p>JULY 3 Butare taken by the RPF.</p> <p>JULY 4 Kigali taken by the RPF - Start of massive exodus of Rwandans, fleeing advancing RPF forces, towards the north-west region (Ruhengeri, Gisenyi) occupied by the interim government.</p> <p>JULY 6 Creation of interim Government of National Union in Rwanda.</p>	<p>JUNE 29 MSF France does not join French NGOs press conference condemning French intervention in Rwanda.</p> <p>JULY 1 MSF Belgium board criticises MSF France’s call for armed intervention - MSF Belgium Press release advising of population displacement “ordered by the RPF”... “in poor conditions and with no real preparation.”</p> <p>JULY 4-12 MSF Belgium/MSF France/MSF Holland joint exploratory mission in Turquoise zone around Gikongoro: joint MSF France/Holland programme decided, then abandoned by MSF Holland.</p> <p>JULY 9 MSF Belgium HQ receives confidential report by the coordinator in Rwanda, on RPF human rights violations.</p>

	International	Rwanda	MSF
1994	<p>AUGUST 21 The last French soldiers leave the Turquoise zone.</p> <p>OCTOBER Interim report by Security Council experts: 'acts of genocide' have indeed been committed against the Tutsi in Rwanda.</p> <p>NOVEMBER 8 Security Council adopts Resolution 955 establishing an International Criminal Court to hear the crimes committed in Rwanda.</p>	<p>JULY 14 Ruhengeri taken by the RPF - Several hundred thousand Rwandans arrive in Goma (Zaire).</p> <p>JULY 16 Rwandan armed forces arrive in Goma - 13 ministers and the self-proclaimed president of the interim government take refuge in the 'safe' humanitarian zone in Rwanda.</p> <p>JULY 17 Gisenyi taken by the RPF - Interim government takes refuge in Zaire - Pasteur Bizimungu named President of the Rwandan Republic by the RPF.</p> <p>JULY 19 Establishment of Government of National Unity in Rwanda.</p>	<p>AUGUST MSF Belgium, with legal support from MSF France legal advisor, sets up a Citizens' Network providing emergency technical back-up for Rwandan legal system.</p>

The Speaking Out case studies is a series of studies from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) that openly examine and analyse the organisation's actions and decision-making process during complex humanitarian interventions focusing on dilemmas surrounding speaking out.

The methodology aims at establishing the facts and setting out a chronological presentation of the positions adopted at the time. It enables the reconstruction of dilemmas, constraints and controversies without pre-judging the quality of the decisions made.

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