

Official Transcript: Roland Amoussouga (Part 10 of 13)



Role:	Spokesperson for the Tribunal
Country of Origin:	Togo
Interview Date:	29 October 2008, 30 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Batya Friedman Donald J Horowitz Ronald Slye Robert Utter
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Roland Amoussouga discusses his extensive history working for the UN and with the Rwanda Tribunal. As Chief of External Relations he describes the function and operation of the strategic planning section of the Tribunal and reflects on the difficulty of working in Kigali immediately following the genocide. He highlights the need to train and prepare staff members sent to work in post-conflict situations, and emphasizes the need to create training manuals for humanitarian workers placed in conflict situations in the future.

The transcript of Part 10 begins on the following page.

Part 10

00:00 **Ronald Slye: One last question before we shift gears – what, what is do you think the largest misperception in Rwanda about the tribunal?**

00:10 You know we made a survey two years ago from a scientific survey that we ask the Rwandan University and one of their, an association that deals with international law. We, we, we order that survey, we agree, we participated in how to determine the criterias, the – how the sampling of the population, the target group and the techniques that we have to agree on and they come out with fascinating results.

00:57 And that result was so amazing for us that they love what we're doing. They love what we're doing and the perception that some of them have about the luxury of this court, the delay process, is also reinforced by the political manipulation to diabolize the tribunal; to make us look very bad and to make us look good when it serves a cause.

01:31 And you know we have had decisions that have tested the will of all parties concerned. Barayagwiza – when the court decided that ok, Barayagwiza, the Prosecutor violated his rights therefore he should be set free. Immediately there was a big fight with Rwanda government. They even forbidden the Prosecutor to enter, Carla Del Ponte.

02:02 They put pressure on witnesses not to come and there was a threat from the tribunal to report Rwanda to the Security Council until the time appeals chamber come and reverse and then we got – the relationship got normalized. And during that time, you should have seen how the NGOs through victims were going after the tribunal.

02:32 And they have a good forum to broadcast whatever they want against the tribunal. But the reality is that by virtue of our presence, we have greatly contributed to bringing good sleep to the people of Rwanda; to bringing peace and security to the people of Rwanda.

02:56 Rwanda itself would never have been able to arrest any of the top fugitives that we have arrested because they did not have extradition treaties and they did not yet build trust and confidence relationships with those member state to enable them to send freely the people that were hiding there.

03:24 Thanks to the work of this tribunal, we have taken out of the main traffic obstacle to peace and reconciliation in Rwanda through the people who were the main target of the Prosecutor. When they were before free of their movement in a refugee camp or elsewhere Rwanda was not sleeping. There were always attack, attack from the bordering.

03:55 They were transforming the DRC, the eastern part of DRC into a boot camp, into a, a place where they were launching attack against Rwanda. And as you know because of that, you witnessed almost the first African world war in there because the Rwandan people decided to go in and to close down those camps that nobody wants to c-, to close.

- 04:21 But ICTR was effective by arresting 16 out of the 19 members of the government, by arresting the leadership of the army, by arresting the middle ranking officers of the army, by arresting almost at least 90% of the political leadership of the government structures from the top to the bottom, by arresting the militia leaders, by arresting the business people, the clergy leaders.
- 04:55 Those are including the media leaders; those who have contributed to make the genocide a success. And that was a powerful message of the ICTR struggling to fight against impunity and to substitute the culture of impunity by a culture of an accountabil-, of accountability. Because it was the first time ever that a leadership, a political leadership of a country happened to be behind bars – not by virtue of at gunpoint, but by virtue of the power of the paper.
- 05:36 In Haiti they used to say constitution is paper. Guns are iron. And they all believed that it's only through iron that you get power because that has been the reputation in their countries. But we proved to the Rwandan people that with the paper, with the strong will of the international community, impunity shall not be allowed to prevail.
- 06:04 And that message, the people – the grassroots people understood it. And being a chief of witness protection, the first time I cry in this court was the day I brought in an old lady, 85 years old lady whose kids were all killed, husband killed, and she was raped. And I brought her in court here to testify in the first case.
- 06:32 And this lady – I did not speak sh-, Kinyarwanda, I used an interpreter. We developed a kind of special relationship. She was so funny; you will never, you would never believe what she went through. And when she entered the courtroom, we prepare her, when she entered the courtroom, she, she was smiling. And then when they asked her, "Witness, could you identify the accused person?"
- 07:10 The old mama stood up, walk, went to see the prosecutors' face; they were all white. Look at them, look at one of the few blacks in the team of the prosecutor, she moves away, she looks at the court reporter, she moves away, she look at the judges, she moves away, she look at the registry members, she move away, she look at the defense counsel, she move away, she look at the accused person, she move away.
- 07:39 And when she came again to see the accused person, she bowed to the accused person and she went back and sit. () say, "Where is the accused person?" "He's there." "Who, who are you talking about?" "He's there." The judges said "Can you point the finger?" Say "In my culture you don't point the finger to powerful people." Said "No, he was the mayor."
- 08:09 And the mayor was the most powerful. And the court agreed to – agreed that the lady has recognized the accused person on the basis of that sign. And then when we went home, I said, "Mama, how do you feel?" "I'm so happy. I could not believe that I'll have this day in my life to see the son of God to be there with handcuff. No, it's not possible. I can die today and go and see my kids and report back to them that justice has been done."

- 08:50 By simple view of this, the old mama say, "I'm very happy." And that has been the symptom of the reaction of the people who got the opportunity to come and (____) it, and they're happy when they hear that those guys who thought that were, they were not touchable happened to be touched and they are behind (___).
- 09:15 So for me, that is what I prefer to retain as the feelings of the people of Rwanda; the true people who suffered, not the politician – we can argue with the politicians, but the majority. And that is what the survey identified and we were so happy personally that the politician view did not alter completely the true feelings of the victims of the population about the impact of this tribunal work on the national reconciliation process.
- 09:54 That we are confident that this is tremendous. It's something that history will recognize that without ICTR, peace would never have been in Rwanda and would never have been a long or sustainable peace; never.
- 10:14 RS: It's a very powerful story.**