STATEMENT FROM JEAN KAMBANDA

Jean KAMBANDA, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Rwanda is said to have been convicted without trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

In 2003, Mr Kambanda was contacted and he made a statement as to what his true position was. The objective of this statement is to make it clear that he never pleaded guilty to genocide or anything like it.

STATEMENT (Translation)

I, the undersigned, Jean KAMBANDA, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Rwanda state on my honour:

1. The Interim Government that I directed was put in place by the political parties, with the intention of filling in the institutional void created by the assassination of President Habyarimana on April 6, 1994. The FAR did not play any role, either in the choice of ministers, or in the applicable law for putting the government in place. However, in regard to the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the majority of whose legal representatives had been assassinated or disappeared, we must accept that the choice of the personalities in its Political Bureau that had to represent it in the meeting to put in place the Interim Government was reviewed in the Military Crisis Committee according, essentially, to their presence in Kigali.

The action to fill in the institutional void was initiated by Roger BOOH-BOOH, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations as well as by the accredited ambassadors in Kigali, notably the Ambassador of the United States of America, Mr. RAWSON. These two personalities wished that the MRND designate a candidate to replace the assassinated President HABYARIMANA. Following the assassination of the Prime Minister Agathe
UWILINGIMANA, the parties of the coalition government were reunited in order to replace her.

2. In the interest of the Rwandan people, I accepted the post of Prime Minister. This post was proposed to me by my party the MDR, in conformity with the Protocol of Agreement of April 7, 1992, that permitted the entry of an opposition into the government. This protocol attributed the post of Prime Minister to the MDR. In accepting this post I committed myself to do all I could to put an end to the troubles. All the speeches I made and all the steps that I took were done with that purpose. Unfortunately the RPF did not adopt the same constructive attitude, which would have, without any doubt, led to a cessation of the violence.

3. The parties signatory to the agreement of April 8, 1994 determined the most important missions of the Interim Government. These missions consisted of restoring security to the country, stopping the massacres that had lasted three days, negotiating with the RPF to put in place the Institutions of the Broad Based Transition, as well as assuring the food needs of the population with a priority given to the displaced population that the RPF, in the course of combat, pushed before them without pity. Those who did not flee them, died. From the fact that the massacres had lasted for three days, it was impossible for the government that I headed to have planned such massacres. Its members had nothing in common as to an ideological plan that could have anticipated the assassination of President HABYARIMANA that they also could not foresee. Any planning between the political parties was impossible.

4. At no time, during the exercise of my function as Prime Minister, did I have any knowledge of the conception of any plan for these massacres, neither before nor after the assassination of President HABYARIMANA. I would have known of such a plan as I had the Central Intelligence Service under my control. Without the assassination of President HABYARIMANA, interethnic massacres of such a scale would certainly not have taken place. It is therefore
essential to investigate the author or authors of that attack who are the ones principally responsible for the consequences of their crime. The Interim Government that I directed was sworn in office April 9th, 1994 during the investigation of all the clues that could lead to the identity of the terrorists behind the attack of April 6, 1994. It is in this way that, as early as April 11, 1994 during the meetings I had, in company with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with Canadian General Romeo DALLAIRE, Commander of the UNAMIR, I formally asked that he conduct investigations to identify the authors of the attack of April 6. More, as one can see by my exchange of correspondence with General Dallaire, from the 2nd and 7th May 1994, as well as during our many meetings at Gitarama, this subject was always my central preoccupation. With regard to the internal situation, from its swearing-in, the Interim Government put in place a commission of enquiry composed of representatives of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister’s office and the Ministers of National Defence, Justice and Transport and Communication, etc. Due to the pressures of the war, the said commission could not make any report but was able to define certain important elements for the continuation of the investigation, one of then being the identification of the weapon used in the crime. Later, in exile and even today, I continued the said investigations to indicate the paths that could bring the successful identification of the perpetrator of this terrorist act and its backers.

5. Returning to the non-existence of evidence of planning of massacres that followed the assassination of President HABYARIMANA, I indicated in earlier statements that it was only during my exile in the east of Zaire that I became aware of a confidential document about the military training of a certain number of youth of the MRND and CDR that let one think that certain groups outside of the government could have conceived of such a plan; but that remains to be proved.

[Editor’s note: Subsequent trials at ICTR proved this to be false as it was ruled that there was no military training of any youth militia at all]
6. Even if, effectively, no attempt to take power was made by the army or by the Gendarmerie as such, according to my sources, Colonel Bagasora did try to take power. He was dissuaded from doing so by the senior authorities of these two armed corps in the meeting of 7th of April 1994. To convince oneself of that one can read the following testimony of Major CYIZA who participated in the said meeting, testimony given before the Belgian Parliamentary Commission. “Colonel Bagasora wanted to take power but the officers who were ignorant of the death of the different civilian authorities (certain of them had arrived by helicopter from the interior of the country) wanted to refer matters to the government. The meeting had put in place a Military Crisis Committee (CMC) that Colonel Bagasora had tried in vain to preside over during a meeting in the afternoon. When Colonel Bagasora realised that his attempt to take power had failed he decided to make an appeal to the Interahamwe and put in place the Kambanda government (who was hidden for his protection)”

[Editor’s note: This testimony by Cyiza above is now known to be false as ICTR ruled that Bagasora never made any appeal to the Interahamwe of any kind at any time-nor did he personally try to take power. He merely suggested that the military take charge as it was clearly a war situation-the other officers, strangely, refused and insisted on doing nothing and letting the government run things-even though its leaders had been killed by the RPF.]

7. General Augustin NDINDILIYIMANA, the most senior and highest ranked officer, united the Rwandan officers and the high functionaries of the UNAMIR with a view to finding the solutions to the problems that faced the nation at that moment. The participants at the meeting of April 6, 1994, just after the attack against the presidential plane, decided to designate a replacement for the army chief of staff, joint patrols with the National Gendarmerie and UNAMIR and to leave it to UNAMIR to secure the debris of the plane of President HABYARIMANA with a view to making further investigations. During that meeting the Commander of UNAMIR was asked to reinforce security in the residential quarter of the Ministers that was under his control.
8. The role of the crisis committee was limited to taking the first security measures and to ask the advice of the representative of the Secretary-General of the UN. General DALLAIRE, Commander of UNAMIR, as well as Colonel MARCHAL, participated in all the meetings in which those decisions were made. It was unthinkable to plan the taking of power or genocide and to invite foreigners into the meetings held for such a thing. General NDINDILIYIMANA made a complete report to me of the unfolding of the events up to my entry into office.

9. During my mandate, I had no conflict with General NDINDILIYIMANA and I can confirm that he did everything he could to accomplish his mission of protection of persons and defence of the territory especially the gendarmerie installations. The gendarmerie protected threatened persons in Kigali, Gitarama, Butare, and other places in the country. The recorded failures that I have already raised in my previous statements resulted from the insufficiency of the strength of his force in the face of the attacks of the RPF and the chaos that they created.

10. I deplore the absence of security at the seat of the interim government at the Hotel des Diplomates as well as its forced departure from the capital under the instigation of the new chief of staff after only two days of function.

11. Since April 7, 1994, NDINDILIYIMANA, proposed to General DALLAIRE to bring the RPF into discussions in order to get control of the crisis with the FAR but the RPF refused. Next, by its dilatory manoeuvres, the RPF tried to negotiate with the military, as General NDINDILIYIMANA explained to the government, and I accepted that, but the RPF slipped away.

12. I also certify that I was informed by my services that General NDINDILIYIMANA ran a lot of risks in order to save life due to his positive attitude towards the return to peace. That is why I decided to nominate him ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, with the view of removing him from these threats.
13. In my role as head of the government, I tried to enter into contact with the RPF in order to put in place the Institutions of the Broad Based Transition. I met with a refusal from the RPF. I equally had contact with General DALLAIRE about that. He came often to Gitarama and on each occasion, I asked him to bring the RPF to less radical behaviour.

14. Several other attempts were initiated by the Interim Government in order to get the country out of its diplomatic isolation. Unfortunately, these initiatives were rebuffed by the responsible people in the western world, including in countries such as Belgium, considered until then, as having close relations with the people of Rwanda. Thus, while he represented his country at the funeral of the president of Burundi, Cyprien NTARYAMIRA, assassinated, as we know, at the same time as President HABYARIMANA, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, JEROME BICAMUMPAKA, wished, through the good-offices of the IDC (International Christian Democrats), to renew diplomacy with Belgium. He wished, by this route, to promote a dialogue with the RPF with the view of coming to an immediate cease-fire. It was, for the Interim Government, the only practical way to stop the massacres and permit the reassignment of the FAR to a primary mission of pacification and disarmament of self-defence groups who would no longer have the pretext of presenting themselves as the righters of the wrongs of the internal enemies or RPF infiltrators.

15. As Prime Minister, in agreement with the President of the Republic, I sent missions outside the country, in particular to the UN and the OAU in order to inform the International Community about the Rwandan drama as well as our willingness to talk with the RPF and its categorical refusal to do so. I sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs on a long trip that took him from Tunis to New York where he addressed the OAU and the Security Counsel with a view of saving the Rwandan people who were tearing each other apart. The members of the Security Counsel did nothing except to reduce the numbers of men in UNAMIR, abandoning the people of Rwandan. A Rwandan
delegation, conducted by the President of the Republic as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Tunis. The purpose of this trip was to profit from the summit of the OAU, but the RPF remained inflexible. At Gbadolite in Zaire under the mediation of President MOBUTU, General GATSINZI signed a protocol for a cease-fire in the name of the government but the RPF once again slipped away. I also sent the Minister of Transportation and Communication to Tanzania where the authorities of that country had prepared a cease-fire proposal. Only my minister signed while the RPF categorically refused.

16. I also swear also that the spread of trouble over the entire Rwandan territory was not caused by the government or by the FAR. The infiltrators of the RPF are responsible for that. We succeeded in capturing their plans, the names of their agents, and their arms caches in Kigali, Bisesero, Kibungo, etc. The mass graves dug deep by the accomplices of the RPF were discovered in many places. The terrorised population knew of this and considered it as a threat to their lives. The government, I at the head, never stopped to explain to the population that they cannot confuse the Tutsi and the RPF and that their accomplices must be arrested and brought before the authorities.

17. In regard to the death of the Blue Helmets, to my knowledge, no order was given by the Army or by the Gendarmerie. Before the death of those soldiers General DALLAIRE and the Commander of the Belgian Battalion were aware of the danger their men ran but did nothing to intervene. They did not alert the Rwandan military authorities. General DALLAIRE, who saw his men in the act of being killed went to a meeting of officers at the Senior Military School but did not inform General NDINDILIYIMANA or any other military authority. For more than eight hours they did not even try to find out what happened to Lt. LOTIN’s unit. Nevertheless, I gave instructions to the Ministers of Defence and Justice to follow up on that file and identify the guilty so that they could be punished according to law.
18. In the result, I consider that my isolation, and the absence of any process that respected the rights of the defence, have denied me a real trial that could only be a combined trial of the members of the Interim Government, together and thereby finally giving the word to one of the key actors who is able to explain the precise unfolding of events and the concrete responsibilities of this one and the other. This is the reason why my testimony rests unused or made the belated object of negotiations that have nothing to do with the proper unfolding of justice.

Done at Bamako, the 23rd of September, 2003
Jean KAMBANDA