

25.09.07 - ICTR/BUTARE - FILIP REYNTJENS BRINGS UP THE "SYNDICATES OF INFORMERS" IN RWANDA

Arusha, 25 September 2007 (FH) - Filip Reyntjens, a Belgian historian called as an expert witness for the defence before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) brought up the "syndicates of informers" which prevail in Rwanda and the ICTR.

He notably cited a report from the American State Department on the semi-traditional gacaca courts stating that in 2006 "there were constant concerns among the observers and the analysts relating to a great number of people who committed false testimony, in spite of the existence of provisions repressing this practice"

The specialist pointed out that these false witnesses were a "very well-known old phenomenon (...) that everyone recognizes and that worries many people including, I believe, the authorities". "In Rwanda there are false testimonies for the prosecution and the defence" he added, citing another expert witness, French sociologist André Guichaoua.

"Witnesses, he added, know very well what is expected of them, they do not believe in anonymity when prosecutors or investigators listen to them, it is in the presence of Rwandan translators". "In Belgium it is in the presence of Rwandan senior legal police officers that the letters of request are done" testified Reyntjens.

"I know that witnesses are prepared before testifying here", he said. "It is extremely difficult in these circumstances to say something which one knows that the Rwandan authorities do not want it to be known", the historian added. "And I want to insist on the fact that it is a totalitarian authority which exerts a total control on the population and on the territory of Rwanda", Reyntjens stated.

The Belgian political scientist, one of the best Western specialists of Rwanda, was called to the rescue by the defence of the former mayor of Ngoma, in the former prefecture of Butare, Joseph Kanyabashi, on trial alongside five others.

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