

Rwandan genocide

June 1, 2021

In news- French President Emmanuel Macron recently acknowledged his country's "overwhelming responsibility" in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

About the genocide-

- The **majority Hutus and minority Tutsis** have had a troubled relationship in Rwanda.
- German and Belgian colonialists ruled Rwanda through the **Tutsi monarchy**.
- **Tutsis** were appointed as local administrative chiefs and the **ethnic minority** enjoyed relatively better educational and employment opportunities, which led to widespread resentment among the Hutus.
- In 1959, Rwanda saw violent riots led by Hutus in which some 20,000 Tutsis were killed and many more were displaced.
- In the 1960 elections, organised by the Belgians, Hutu parties gained control of nearly all local communes.
- In 1961, **Hutu leader Gregoire Kayibanda** declared Rwanda an autonomous republic and in **1962 the country became independent**.
- **Kayibanda became Rwanda's first elected President**, while the Tutsis who fled the country formed armed insurgencies.
- Since then, Rwanda had been controlled by Hutus, until their genocidal regime was toppled by the **Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)** in 1994.
- The crisis escalated in the 1990s when the RPF, **led by Paul Kagame**, grew in strength and posed a serious challenge to the regime of **President Habyarimana**, who was backed by France and had defence ties with Israel.
- In 1993, Habyarimana signed a **peace agreement (Arusha Accords)** with the RPF.

- This led to resentment among Hutu militias, backed by the government, towards local Tutsi population, who were accused of collaborators of the RPF.
- On April 6, 1994, a Falcon 50 jet carrying President Habyarimana and his Burundi counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down near Kigali International Airport.
- The Hutu-led government blamed the RPF for the attack on the presidential jet.
- The **military and Hutu militias**, with support from the government, launched a premeditated violent campaign on April 7, aimed at eliminating the entire Tutsi communities.
- Bodies were dumped in the **Nyabarongo River** and **France, backed the Hutu government** and did nothing to stop the massacre.
- In June, France deployed a much-delayed UN-backed military force in southwest Rwanda called **Operation Turquoise** which was able to save some people, but was accused of sheltering some of the genocide's perpetrators.
- Thousands were slaughtered in churches where they sought refuge.
- The killings came to an end after the RPF, under Paul Kagame's command captured Kigali and toppled the Hutu regime.
- Over the course of 100 days, **over 8 lakh people died, estimated to amount up to 20% of Rwanda's population.**