

Rwanda

Response to Information Request Number:	RWA00002.OGC
Date:	21 March 2000
Subject:	Rwanda: Hutu and Tutsi intermarriage
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, D.C.
Keywords:	Rwanda / Marriage / Married women / Right to marry / Spouses / Discrimination based on ethnic origin / Ethnic conflicts / Gross human rights violations / Ethnic minorities / Massacres

Query:

Would a Tutsi woman married to a Hutu man in 1990 currently be at risk of harm in Rwanda?

Response:

Intermarriage between Hutu and Tutsi is not an unfamiliar practice in Rwandan society (UNHCR, July 1999). Despite the 1990-1994 genocidal rash and the continued atmosphere of distrust, revenge and fear, the practice still occurs, albeit sporadically (U.S. Committee for Refugees, February 1998). Though societal attitudes in Rwanda are subject to fluctuation, there appears to be little opportunity for systematic mistreatment of intermarried couples by government authorities or society-at-large. While the practice may strain domestic situations within some extended families, there seems to be no widespread campaign to challenge mixed marriages, either new or old (Drumtra, 9 February 2000). Harassment, however, is not unheard of (DOS, 9 February 2000).

In the minds of Rwandans, the memory of the massacres has not dissipated. During the 1994 genocide there were reports of Hutus killing their Tutsi spouses (HRW March 1999, 216). In 1990, a government-sponsored publication named any Muhutu (Hutu) who married a Tutsi a traitor (HRI 1998). As late as 1996, there were reports that Tutsi men married to Hutu women were threatened by their Tutsi family members and driven off of their land (HRW Sept. 1996).

These torments, along with the reintegration of refugees and the resurgence of former FAR and Interahamwe members into society's folds, have made ethnic reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi difficult, further jeopardizing an opportunity for stability in Rwanda (United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate March 1998).

Rwandans currently co-exist under a Government of National Unity led by a Hutu president and supported by a Tutsi-dominated military force. "Search sweeps" by the government security force, Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), in 1999, were commonplace and scores of 'revenge' killings during these sessions riddled the northwest region of the country (*Country Reports 1998* April 1999, 339-348). In December 1998, a killing spree of unarmed citizens spread from the northwest areas of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri into central Gitarama (United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate March 1998).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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