

## Official Transcript: Roland Amoussouga (Part 3 of 13)



<b>Role:</b>	Spokesperson for the Tribunal
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	Togo
<b>Interview Date:</b>	29 October 2008, 30 October 2008
<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Batya Friedman Donald J Horowitz Ronald Slye Robert Utter
<b>Videographer:</b>	Max Andrews
<b>Interpreter:</b>	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 3 begins on the following page.*

## Part 3

**00:00** **Note: The immediate portion of video prior to this segment was lost due to corrupted digital files. The interview continues here.**

00:08 . . . who happened to be escapees from the violences. They were in many refugee camps. We went through most of the refugee camps. We interview the direct eye witnesses. We collected documents from various ministries. We proceeded to analyze those document. We had a database. We had also gathered all the information. We processed them.

00:46 There were intelligence officers who gathered also intelligence information, a report, and all together put together, help to prepare a report and to help the team of expert to assess what has been gathered from, on the ground.

**01:06** **Batya Friedman: Mm-hmm. So going in and a-, talking with witnesses in this situation where so many people have been killed is very different than investigating say a murder where one or two or a small number of people have been killed. I know it was quite a long time ago but what was that process like? And what about that process would you want, you know, should other genocides occur, would you want other investigators to know, especially those people who are arriving so soon after the events?**

01:46 You know it was one of the most challenging experience for everybody. Because genocide does not occur all the time; it's a once upon a time and as I said evidence was fresh. I mean the wounds were fresh. It's not the bones that you are seeing, you are seeing the wounds. Even those who are dead, you see them as body, fresh bodies with their wounds.

02:24 For those that you don't have the opportunity to see the flesh, you can see their clothing and everything. And you can also see the fear; what I call the mass fear meaning that the whole group, the psychology of people who are afraid who happened to escape death who are put together not knowing their fate.

02:57 How to establish connections with them, how to draw them out of their status of fear, how to get them to talk, how to get them to trust you, how to get them to free themselves and live and allow what they have in their, their heart to come out. And for me, it was such a very awkward experience. I have never seen this magnitude of dead bodies in my life; thousands, thousand.

03:36 Babies, girls, everywhere and the smell was unbelievable. And the way they picture; I took more than 500 pictures at that time. And we all were wearing masks of course but for over three months I s-, refused to eat any meat. That was something that personally was – I found appalling, I could not because any time I take any meat in my mouth I have a flashback.

04:16 And also for us it was extremely dangerous because the country was not yet pacified as they say it, in the sense that it's not peaceful. There are spots of resistance and you can

- get killed at any given time. I lost four or five of my colleagues in the process but basically it was very dangerous. And we have not been able to get in with all the necessary equipment.
- 04:53 The status of preparedness was not good. And what I learned from it is that for future generation, once you say there is mass killing somewhere and you want to deploy people, immediately you have to draw a plan that provides all the necessary resources to help the mission; once the mission hit the ground, they can run.
- 05:24 All the equipment. You don't need to suffer to share a car. We did not have enough cars. We have to decide on the priority; who is going to have this car and you come back and you leave the car and it was a nightmare in terms of logistics. And also you have, you can not go anywhere without escort and the UN mission did not have enough people at that time to support the various demand from the NGOs, from the UN agencies, from everywhere.
- 06:01 So the lack of resources in the initial phase of deployment was acute. Secondly, you need to prepare mentally those who have to go to the ground, meaning that you have to brief them. Experts, who have gone through such an experience in the past, should let them know that this is not just a simple ball game. It's really a game where you have to have a strong stomach.
- 06:31 And you have to have a strong mindset because what you are going to discover on the ground i-, there is nothing to be compared with. And there was one thing that I was so much affected by two images that re-, remain in my mind up to today. It's two hands of babies in front of a church in Nyarubuye near Kibongo. Like this on the ground, the two hands, like this. It was like this. Not like this but like this.
- 07:14 The second one was inside a church where they cut the heads off all the statues; the, the stone statues and the wooden statues. They beheaded all the statues; the J-, Jesus, Mary, everybody, they beheaded them. There were many dead bodies everywhere and I went behind where they have the drums and I saw a young lady was tied up with her legs open and they had plugged inside her a big batons that came out – they impaled her from the bottom to the top.
- 08:01 And they tied her up with a, a, a iron, iron fil de fer, iron cord. How I could not believe it. And I was seeing the body, the lady was facing me. She's dead but, you know, the image was so intense. And also, one of my duties was to count the body count – the body – the bodies, you know, and that's where I learn how to count dead bodies, meaning that if you want to have accurate account, you have to count the heads.
- 08:45 You have to put the heads together to count them because you cannot expect to retrieve all the body parts so you have to. It was very difficult. So for me it is essential to give a training to people and to train them also on the sensitivity of their mission. How best could you approach people in such a situation? Even if you are a well-trained psychologist or doctor and everything, when you hit the ground, it's not the same.

- 09:24 Personally I almost lost my leg because I fell in one of the mass grave and for two years I could not wear any shoes. I had two surgeries; major surgeries on my leg. It was a very intense moment but it helped me to build up a character. It helped me also not to be afraid of dying because before I used to cry when one person dies. When I lost my mom, I never stopped crying. In my culture you cry your death always and every year you commemorate and you cry.
- 10:11 But this was a hell of new scale that I have never seen in my life. And again on a personal level, I tried to retrieve the girlfriend of my friend. And I went all the way to the place where she used to live because she was in touch with my friend and my friend was helping her to get out of the country but he did not succeed.
- 10:43 So I went and saw where she was buried with all her family in the house and I learned about how this has happened.