

Panel 2: Journalism as Genocide - The Media Trial

Introduction

Allan Thompson: Okay, ladies and gentleman, we're going to resume with panel number two. The chairperson for this panel is journalist Thierry Cruvellier, who has years of experience with the Rwanda file and knows each of the panelists very well. So Thierry will take over, and I will slip to the side.

Thierry Cruvellier: Welcome back, I'm confused about the language I should use. It's pretty pleasant to be in Canada, way we can speak French and English. So maybe I'm going to switch to French for a change. In November, 1994, a few months after the genocide, the Security Council at the UN created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. In January, 1997, the trial began in Arusha, in Tanzania. In May, 2000, since we have to move along quickly in this case, in May, 2000, Georges Ruggiu, who we referred to a little earlier this morning, who was the only non-Rwandan journalist at RTLM decided to plead guilty, and was convicted, and sentenced to 12 years in prison. But it was a few months later that the main trial opened dealing with the question at issue to us today, which is the media trial with Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, both of which were members of the initiative committee, and founders of RTLM, and Hassan Ngeze, who was the editor-in-chief of the newspaper Kangura. The trial opened in October, 2000, and ended only in August, 2003. So this gives you some idea therefore of the issues they tried to deal with there. And it ended with the conviction and prison for life for nine members Nahimana, Ngeze, and 35 years also for reasons for procedure for Barayagwiza.

To talk about this trial therefore, we have panelists here, you have them listed on the program; Thomas Kamilindi, who has now a rather white beard, so I guess you can see he's a veteran therefore of journalism in Rwanda. Charity Simone also, who was also very active in that trial, and Jean-Marie Biju Duval, who defended Nahimana, and has the courage to come and explain his viewpoint here before a certain number of witnesses, who really did testify against his client, because Thomas testified. And our last speaker here is Francois-Xavier Nsanzuwera also testified in the media trial. So we've also got his biography also. So the trial today is now before the Court of Appeal. So it's not all over yet in legal terms. We have to remember, and this is explained perhaps why some things were dealt with by these legal specialists. So I've think we've heard a lot. We've seen a lot also, and from the moment we can start to think from a rather critical viewpoint about this trial, and about some of the questions, which it raised. I thinking, for example, of two main issues, which I hope we'll be able to deal with a little this morning; the first is to what degree international justice did, in fact, perform it's responsibility to judge these individuals. I think it's very important therefore to try and look at the details of this the way in which they tried to actually perform the mission.

The second problem: what are the consequences and the questions that judgment delivered? One of the questions which asks us as journalists, and I draw your attention to this, because for some of us, there are some concerns when we read this judgment on the consequences it could have, given the behaviour of the media. So I hope the members of the panel therefore will be able to enlighten us to some degree on this. Thomas you have the floor.