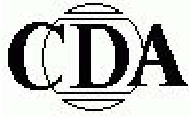

STEPS TOWARD CONFLICT PREVENTION PROJECT

Case Study

Resistance and Protection: Muslim Community Actions During the Rwandan Genocide

This case study is one of a series of case studies developed as part of the Steps Toward Conflict Prevention Project (STEPS), directed by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA), in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. The STEPS project seeks to understand how certain communities are able to exempt themselves from the violence that surrounds them. The Project is gathering case studies from such communities around the world, in an effort to identify patterns and to draw lessons about conflict prevention.

The cases were written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people—the case writer(s), individuals, agencies, participants, and observers—at the point it was written. ***This case study is not intended for citation or publication. It is not a final product of the STEPS Project.***

The Project would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time and experience for these case studies, and for their willingness to share their experiences. Not all of the cases will be made public, in deference to the people and communities involved.

This case study is a working document. We welcome all feedback and comments. For more information on the STEPS project and CDA, see www.cdainc.com.

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February 2003 (Updated May 2005)

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Resistance and Protection: Muslim Community Actions During the Rwandan Genocide

February 2003 (Updated May 2005)

Kristin C. Doughty and David Moussa Ntambara

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This case study examines the role of the Muslim community in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. It was developed as part of the Steps Toward Conflict Prevention Project, directed by the Collaborative for Development Action, Inc., in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Steps Toward Conflict Prevention project seeks to understand more about, and draw lessons from, communities around the world that have been able to disengage from the violent conflicts that surround them.

The goal of this case study was to learn more about a widespread perception that the Muslim community in Rwanda did not participate in the 1994 genocide to the extent that most of the rest of the country did. This perception was cited among others in Philip Gourevitch's well-known book on the genocide, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*: He mentions that the Muslim community "apparently behaved quite well, and as a group, was not active in the genocide, even seeking to save Tutsi Muslims."[1] We wanted to understand first, the extent to which this perception was true; and second, if so, why? If in fact Muslims—who are also Hutus and Tutsis—were able to act differently than most of the rest of the country during a time of national madness, why were they able to? What mechanisms, beliefs, and characteristics allowed that to happen?

We conducted our research through individual interviews, and community meetings with 30-50 people at a time. (See **Appendix 1** for a map of Rwanda, and **Appendix 2** for brief information on the communities visited.) The bulk of these conversations were held during a two-week period in November 2002. One author, Moussa Ntambara, then revisited the communities and held additional discussions in January 2003 in order to probe more deeply into the initial questions. Two years later, in January 2005, Ntambara took the completed case back to the communities where we had held the initial interviews and held feedback sessions to present the case and solicit reactions and responses. Those changes have been incorporated into this final version.

[1] Gourevitch, Philip. *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. p87.

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The goal of the individual interviews was to speak in a context that allowed candor and openness. The purpose of the community meetings was to include a wide range of everyday people in the discussions, to ensure that what we were hearing and learning was generalizeable. In these large "focus group discussions," we included men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, of a range of ages. When possible, we divided the larger groups into sub-groups of ten participants. We spoke with community members, imams and priests, students and scholars, members of NGOs, church-based agencies, and UN organizations, both from within the capital of Kigali Urban and surrounding villages as well as in the Provinces of Kigali Rural (Mabare), Kibuye, Butare (Mugandamure), and Kibungo (Rwamagana). Interviews were conducted in French and Kinyarwanda. As well, we visited several genocide memorials and massacre sites. This case reports what we learned from two-dozen individual interviews and ten community discussions. Within the case, we do not attribute quotes to individual people because unless otherwise noted, the ideas below reflect themes we heard repeated across many people and interviews.

This case is not a detailed look into Islam as a religion, in contrast to other faiths or religious institutions. We went into our discussions with the belief that the principles and teachings of many religions are broadly the same regarding non-violence, compassion for others, etc. Rather, the case looks at the actions of a community in which religion plays a part, though there are clearly other factors at play.

The case begins with a brief history of the Muslim community in Rwanda, and background information on the Rwandan genocide. We then report what we heard about Muslims' actions during the genocide, learned from Muslims and non-Muslims: that the vast majority of the Muslim community acted positively during the genocide, with many Hutu Muslims protecting Tutsi Muslims and non-Muslims. We then offer a preliminary analysis of why and how Muslims as a community acted this way, based on how Muslims describe their own actions, how non-Muslims interpret these, and our perspectives as authors.

SECTION II: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This case does not provide a full background of Islam, Rwandan history, or the 1994 genocide. Rather, we provide below elements of history and background that emerged as important to understanding the Muslim community's actions during the genocide.

A Brief History of Muslims in Rwanda

Islam was introduced into Rwanda through trade in the late 19th century. Muslims who immigrated comprised three different groups: a) Arab and Indian traders from Tanzania, b) the staff and assistants who came with those traders as well as with many colonialists, and c) scholars and religious leaders who were later brought in to educate and lead the increasing Muslim population. Muslims were initially predominantly foreigners who spoke Kiswahili, and who behaved, dressed, and ate differently from the local population. As the community became established, they attracted some Rwandan converts (some

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Muslims claim new converts were drawn to the strong sense of community among Muslims, and the social prestige of the traders). As well, many Muslim men married Rwandan women. Thus, the community increased. Deliberate efforts at preaching and conversion increased in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the Muslim community made up approximately 10% of Rwanda's population. As with other religious faiths in Rwanda, the Muslim community was made up of both ethnic Hutus and ethnic Tutsis.

Muslims were discriminated against by church and state leaders.
The relationship between Muslims in Rwanda and those in power—traditional leaders, the Colonial administration, then the governments of the first and second republic after independence—is understood as historically tense. From the beginning, Rwandan traditional leaders resisted the Muslim Arab and Indian traders' penetration into Rwanda, fearing they would expand the slave trade from Tanzania. As well, many European missionaries who arrived in Rwanda to prepare the ground for colonization saw Islam as a threat. The church leadership was closely linked to the colonial leaders, and therefore this anti-Muslim sentiment became codified in discriminatory policies. The antagonism between the authorities and the marginizalization of Islam and Muslims continued under the different post-independence regimes.

Most Rwandans—85% Christian—were influenced by the government and church's negative propaganda of Muslims, leading to stereotypes and discrimination. Muslims were often referred to by the pejorative term "Umuswahili," which derived from the fact that many Muslims in past generations had spoken Swahili. For their part, Muslims are also reported to have discriminated against indigenous rural Rwandans. Members of each group were often suspicious and distrustful of the other.

Muslims faced discrimination in access to education.
During Colonial times, primary and secondary education were delivered through Christian schools. Muslims had the opportunity to attend these schools, but if they did, most faced efforts on the part of their teachers to convert them. Often, those who resisted conversion were unable to continue school beyond the elementary level. Many told us that they or their siblings or cousins were mysteriously "dropped" from the registry to secondary school, or overtly refused admittance.

Many Muslim parents fearing conversion attempts therefore did not send their children to school at all. Others sent their children to Koranic schools (Madrasa). Through their separation from Christian education, the Muslim community missed the opportunity to develop an elite, since the mission schools provided the educational and networking opportunities for a real future. For the most part, Muslims remained a marginal group involved in trade and jobs that had little influence on either the colonial or indigenous administration. This trend continued after Independence.

Muslims were required to live in settlements.
In the early 1900s, the colonial administration in agreement with the indigenous administration established a policy that Muslims must live in defined settlement areas. A

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decree of June 18, 1925 imposed the following regulations, which lasted until Independence.

- No one in settlement areas could own land; instead they were allocated land portions on loan for no more than a twenty-year period;
- No farming or animal raising could be carried out in those settlements;
- Inhabitants were required to have a residence permit. As well, a permit was required for a Muslim to go into other Rwandan communities.
- A Rwandan citizen from outside the settlement was required to have a permit in order to enter the settlement.

Muslims in settlements were governed by a separate and parallel administration. They had their own appointed leaders who reported to the Colonial administration, and their own courts. No local administrators had power over Muslim settlements.

This separation also meant that Muslims had a comparative level of freedom compared to the rest of Rwandans; for instance, they were not obligated by the Colonial administration to participate in forced labor, a common practice in the rest of Rwanda prior to Independence.

From one perspective, this exemption from forced labor and right to self-defined leadership could be perceived as a comparative privilege to the rest of Rwandans; on the other hand, Muslims saw it as ensuring their marginalization.

These Muslim settlements were called "Swahili camps," or "Centres Extra-Coutumiers," translated as Centers "outside of custom." The people in them were often referred to as "individus detribalizés," or non-tribal people; that is, neither Hutu nor Tutsi nor Twa.

This pattern continued, even with Independence. By 1994, most Muslims still lived together in groups. Former settlement areas were still predominantly Muslim. Even in rural areas that had not traditionally been settlements and where Muslims were less prevalent, they still lived in groups, rather than scattered throughout the hillside.

Muslims sided with Tutsis at Independence.

Many Muslims had an informal allegiance with the Tutsi elite, who allegedly saw the Muslims as more open-minded and well traveled, and more "civilized" in general, than many other Rwandans. Muslims in many areas of Rwanda developed social and business relationships with the ruling Tutsi aristocracy as their dress-makers, drivers, mechanics, etc. These relationships extended to sharing food and sports, but did not translate into political favors (as Muslims did not participate in government), or social favors (as Muslims still faced discrimination in schools). This is partly because there were conflicts between the Tutsi elite and the Colonialists, which prevented these social favors from extending.

When multi-party politics started in the late 1950s, both Muslim Hutus and Tutsis sided with the party that claimed independence from Belgium, Union Nationale du Rwanda

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(UNAR). UNAR was the party affiliated with the King and the Tutsi aristocracy who, like Muslims, felt they could improve their welfare with Independence. The Muslim community thus became linked with the Tutsi aristocracy. In some cases, during the anti-Tutsi massacres post-independence, Muslims were also targeted.

Rwandan Genocide

For many people around the globe, prior to April 1994, Rwanda was a tiny, unknown country in Central/East Africa without much to share either economically or historically. Nearly a decade later, Rwanda is notorious for the atrocities that occurred between April and July of 1994. Most estimates say that the genocide left 800,000 dead in 100 days, an incomprehensible humanitarian, political, and social crisis.

On April 6, 1994, the plane carrying home the late Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and Ntaryamira of Burundi was shot down above the Kanombe International Airport in Kigali. This plane crash, blamed by Hutus on Tutsi rebels, triggered what appeared to be a coordinated attempt by Hutu extremists to eliminate the Tutsi population. Within hours, a campaign of violence spread from the capital, throughout the country. The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who had been under a cease-fire after over three years of fighting with Habyarimana's army, broke the cease-fire and re-launched a military campaign. RPF achieved control and ended the genocide by July, by which time at least 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been massacred.

What baffled and troubled Rwandans and the international community was that much of the violence was neighbor-on-neighbor. Many of the people who killed their fellow Rwandans—often with machetes—were not strangers, but rather had grown up together, went to the same churches and schools, shared the same language and religion, and even intermarried and were related. Many Hutu civilians killed their Tutsi neighbors; even among those who did not pull a trigger or swing a machete, many colluded in their neighbors' murder by, for example, revealing people's hiding places to the militias.

It would be inaccurate to characterize the genocide as a spontaneous eruption of hatred and killing. While the violence manifested largely at the civilian level in the decimation of communities, many emphasize the genocide itself was fundamentally a "crime of the state." It was masterminded and organized by high-level politicians, military officials, and businessmen, who set the stage through strategic inflammatory Hutu-power and anti-Tutsi propaganda, disseminated through schools, media, and political rhetoric. The initial violence was carried out by highly organized state armies, and coordinated Interhamwe militias which were groups of armed youth who killed and terrorized openly. Civilians often became involved at the encouragement or coercion of soldiers and police officers, who forced them to "kill or be killed." Often community members were given incentives to kill including food, money, or being told they could "inherit" the land of the Tutsis they killed. There was a lack of clear and balanced information, as the radio was broadcasting Hutu-power propaganda, and travel restrictions prevented people from moving safely around the country to assess the situation for themselves. There was a vacuum of clear leadership, with confusion and inconsistency. Mayors and administrators

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were under the influence of political and army leaders without official positions. Groups of people who were killing controlled what was happening in many communities. Throughout the genocide, there was virtually no security across the country, and, it seemed to many at the time, it was difficult *not* to get involved. People suspected of protecting others were often sought out and killed by their own communities.

The genocide left Rwanda and the rest of the world reeling from how such a horror could occur. Many scholars, reporters, and aid agencies attempted to explain how so many ordinary Rwandans could have participated in the violence. In this case study, we focus for a time on those who found the capacity *not* to participate in the face of such insecurity and danger. Over the course of our interviews and discussions, we heard many stories of individual Rwandans who took heroic steps in order not only to avoid participating actively in the killings, but also in an effort to protect others, sometimes sacrificing their own lives. For example, we heard a story of a Hutu Christian woman who saved a Tutsi woman by hiding her in a cabinet in her bathroom for weeks, feeding and nursing her at night, praying for her "even when the woman had given up the faith to live, herself." We heard another story of a Hutu nun who refused to be evacuated (by her brother, a Colonel) from among a group of Tutsis, unless they were evacuated as well. After repeatedly refusing to leave, she was killed along with the Tutsis. But these two stories were isolated actions of individuals that did not translate into group actions. Here, we look in detail at the Muslim community because it was able to resist as a community.

SECTION III: MUSLIM COMMUNITY ACTIONS DURING THE GENOCIDE

There is wide recognition among both Muslims and non-Muslims in Rwanda that the vast majority of the Muslim community did not participate in the genocide, but rather acted positively, with many Hutu Muslims protecting Tutsi Muslims and non-Muslims. We heard examples both of passive resistance, where people did not participate in the violence and killing, and active resistance, where people took risks to protect others and defend themselves, sometimes losing their own lives in the process. This was true across the country, in both rural and urban Muslim communities. This information was corroborated by stories from Biryogo, Kibagabaga, Rwamagana, Mabare and Mugandamure.

There are some notable exceptions, everyone agrees. People cited a handful of Muslims who participated, and did so with fervor. We will discuss those later as counter-examples that show the limits of the positive community actions.

Many reminded us that the President of Rwanda made a public statement in 1995 in recognition of the community's positive behavior, at a ceremony celebrating the appointment of the first Muslim member of Cabinet (Minister). He said that Muslims in Rwanda did not participate in the genocide, and called upon them to "teach other Rwandans how to live together."

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There were four elements people repeatedly told us as "proof" concerning Muslims' actions nationwide.

- No Muslim religious leaders have been charged or arrested for participating in the genocide.
- No people who sought refuge at mosques were killed with the collusion of the Muslim leadership. This is in contrast to a trend across the country where those seeking safety at churches and state offices were often killed at the order or with the cooperation of religious and state leaders (who would either directly order the killings, or disclose to the militia the location where people were hiding). When people died at mosques, they were killed *despite* the active resistance of Muslims and non-Muslims protecting them (described below).
- After the genocide, it became clear that a disproportionate number of survivors, both Muslim and non-Muslim, had been protected by Muslims (that is, those who had hidden in Muslim communities survived).
- There are very few Muslims in prison. (There are no accurate statistics available, so this is based on word of mouth.)

People outside the Muslim community reported that during the genocide, it was not common knowledge that Muslims were hiding and protecting people. That is, victims were not necessarily deliberately seeking out Muslims to protect them. Rather, in the aftermath of the genocide, people realized that those who had hidden at mosques were more likely to have survived, and that many survivors had been protected by Muslims.

Some people suggested that perhaps the Muslim participation in the genocide was in fact proportional to their numbers in the population in general. We do not have a final answer on that as accurate statistics are not currently available in Rwanda. However, even without precise numbers, it is clear that kinds of community behavior happened among Muslims that were counter to the norm.

To understand the actions and behavior of the Muslim community, we have found it helpful to separate out the actions of the leadership and the community. The following examples were described as occurring in each of the communities we visited—that is, none is an isolated incident, unless noted as such; rather they represent patterns of actions. (Analysis and explanation for these actions will be discussed separately.)

Muslim Leadership Actions

Background on Muslim Leadership

In 1994, there were two branches to the Muslim religious leadership:

AMUR (Association des Musulmans du Rwanda) was the organization that represented all Muslims in Rwanda. AMUR was created in the mid-1960s as an attempt to coordinate Muslim development efforts by consolidating community representation. AMUR was considered the "Muslim establishment," based in Kigali.

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Ansar Allah was a relatively new, upcoming group of preachers that did conversion in the rural areas. It was created in 1982 by a Libyan religious teacher at the Islamic Cultural Center of Kigali.

Though initially the two organizations co-existed with no problems, tensions developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Ansar requested recognition from the government, which would mean it was no longer under the authority of AMUR. AMUR felt that Ansar, as a Muslim organization, should remain under AMUR's leadership. Ansar, on the other hand, wanted independence and financial support that they felt they did not receive while under the authority of AMUR. From 1991 through 1993, the tensions between the two organizations remained high. For example, some report that AMUR accused Ansar Allah of collaborating with the RPF rebels, which at the time was a very strong accusation.

(It is important to note that this distinction between branches of the leadership was not brought up explicitly by most people we interviewed. Rather, a few members of the leadership explained this history, when probed.)

Leadership Actions

As noted above, no Muslim religious leaders have been implicated in the genocide. We heard of many concrete actions taken by the Muslim leadership to proactively shape the community's actions. (We specify which leadership branch in the examples below, or refer to leadership in general when actions were carried out by both branches.)

- The leadership "corrected" each other—if they perceived that others were becoming too closely involved in negative politics or other activities.

Leading up to the genocide, AMUR was a supporter of the ruling party (MRND). Ansar Allah approached AMUR and cautioned them to avoid getting too close to the government, highlighting the importance of remaining neutral.

- Leaders in the Muslim community—both religious leaders and teachers—anticipated the increasing violence and the potential for further escalation in the period prior to the genocide, and took steps within the community to sensitize the Muslim population, to counter the hate propaganda. They based this on ideals within the Koran.

In the early 1990s, Ansar Allah as an organization instructed its members not to adhere to political parties, as the political landscape in Rwanda was tainted with ethnic affiliation. (Some community members followed this directive, others did not. Some Muslims were in the Muslim party, Parti Pour la Democratie Islamique, which did not have any representation at all in the government.

At the urging of Muslim religious leaders, Muslim teachers did a "sensitization campaign" with their students, actively teaching that people are all equal, ethnicity should

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not be divisive, and people should not kill, but rather should try to rescue victims. As one described, "The Prophet tells us that a time of temptation will come, and we considered this a time of temptation."

At the end of Ramadan, just a few weeks before the genocide began, Ansar Allah distributed pamphlets to Muslims around the country that implored people to remain calm, and to avoid getting caught up in ethnic polarization.

- During this period before the genocide, the leadership spoke out publicly—i.e. in a way that could be heard by non-Muslims, and was therefore quite risky—against violence and the increasing ethnic polarization.

In 1993, as the situation across the country was becoming increasingly volatile and violent, the Muslim leadership issued a "pastoral letter" calling upon Muslims to avoid becoming involved in any political parties that involved ideologies or actions counter to the teachings of the Koran. This message was posted in mosques around the country.

The leadership issued announcements to be read on the government-owned radio station (the only radio station) telling Muslims that there were hard moments coming, and appealing to them to adopt positive values and not be implicated in the coming events. While some of these broadcasts were censored, several got through.[2] This is particularly significant because the radio was being used as a source of negative propaganda, and is commonly understood to have played a central role in fomenting ethnic polarization and contributing to the genocide.

(One person mentioned that Muslim leaders wrote letters to the President as the situation was escalating, imploring the state leadership to recognize its responsibility to the people and end the violence. We were unable to get additional information on this.)

- During the genocide, there were some Muslim leaders who spoke in the mosques against the killings. No one reported Muslim leaders speaking in support of the killings, or appealing to followers to participate (while many Muslims and non-Muslims reported that other religious leaders either actively or covertly condoned the killings).

While they were unable consistently to broadcast radio announcements, many leaders made the same type of announcements in the places people were praying. As one

[2] It is not clear exactly why some radio broadcasts got through and others did not. It was explained to us that messages sent out over the radio during the genocide were contradictory at times, sometimes intentionally. For instance, on some occasions the radio announced declarations against the genocide, and some Interhamwe who did not follow these directions were killed, but most believe that those announcements were only intended to create a false sense of security to lure Tutsis out of hiding and to give the international community the impression that things were under control. At other times, the announcer would simply read a message he was handed without considering the content first, or would not know from whom the message came and therefore whether or not it should be censored. As with the rest of the country, the radio suffered from confusion and inconsistency.

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community described, "Even though it was a hard period of war and genocide, religious leaders continued to teach publicly that killing was a serious sin, and asked people to be calm and patient." Another community member described, "During the genocide, the Muslim leaders were saying 'Don't do this, protect people if you can.'"

Overall, these actions are seen as different from other religious leadership. People say religious leaders of other faiths did not speak out publicly against the genocide, some even spoke obliquely in favor of it, and many religious leaders of other faiths have been implicated and convicted of participating in the genocide.

Muslim Community Actions

Background on Muslim Community

The Muslim communities in Rwanda are characterized in two basic ways:

The former Muslim settlement areas are predominantly Muslim, with families that have been Muslim for generations. Most former settlement areas are urban.

The areas of Muslim expansion include a mixture of Muslims and non-Muslims, as those who converted remained in their homes. These areas are largely rural, and are predominantly areas where Ansar Allah has worked.

Muslim Community Actions

We heard many stories of different ways that Muslim community members acted positively during the genocide. This involved a range of actions, as follows.

- Muslims hid both Muslim and non-Muslim people who were being hunted (mostly Tutsis).

This was the most frequently reported example. As one Muslim described, "You will find very few Muslims who did not hide others." When militia would come to kill people, rather than turning the wanted people in, Muslims would protect them, often sending the sought-after person over the back fence to another Muslim person's home for protection. As one Muslim described, "Whoever managed to arrive in our quartier was hidden and protected, and survived." Muslims described hiding people in their ceiling rafters, and giving women veils and scarves to disguise themselves.

Many suggested that Muslims did this rather than leave to seek refuge, at a time that much of the rest of the country was fleeing. As someone described, "When people were massively running away before the RPF advancement, Muslims continued to hide their wanted colleagues."

Many mentioned that the positive role of the Muslim community was noticed after the threat was gone. As one person described, "At the arrival of the RPF forces, RPF commanders asked about people they thought would have undoubtedly been killed, and were surprised to find out that many of them were alive."

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- Muslims who were not being hunted (i.e. mostly Hutu Muslims) refused to serve as accomplices to the militias for hunting down the “wanted” Muslims (i.e. mostly Tutsi Muslims). Many took advantage of their comparative position of safety to protect others.

Most Muslims did not reveal the hiding places of people being protected, or otherwise collude to trap and capture people. As one person described, “There were Tutsis brought to Mugandamure residents by the militia with orders to kill them. Instead, the Mugandamure Muslims hid them.”

Hutu Muslims who could move about and travel would buy food, drink, and medicine, and bring them back for the people who were being hidden and protected.

Hutu Muslims in several communities put up road blocks to prevent people from coming in, and therefore used these blocks to protect Tutsis, while elsewhere in the country, similar roadblocks were being used as barriers for catching and killing fugitive Tutsis. In some cases, people cited that no one died at these barriers, but rather, survived because of them.

- Muslims took steps to correct each others’ actions.

Many Muslims tried to correct and shape the behavior of Muslims within their community who seemed to be leaning towards violence. For example, when one Muslim community member in Mugandamure encouraged his colleagues to get involved in the escalating violence, the community in the mosque told him, “Do you really want to do that? If so, we would have to start with your wife, since she is Tutsi.” He did not provoke any further.

In Rwamagana, Muslims attacked and destroyed the residence of an Interhamwe militia member who tried to provoke killings, in order to compel him to stop.

Many Muslim fathers encouraged their children not to get involved in the fighting, and often prohibited them from bringing arms into the house. Carrying a gun was seen as an overt proof of active involvement in the genocide. Thus, those carrying arms were perceived not only as supporters of the genocidal government but also as active members of the killing squads.

- Many Muslims engaged directly with those who were killing in an effort to get them to stop, at great personal risk.

For example, a powerful Hutu Muslim who was well known in Kibagabaga appealed to the broader community not to kill, saying “If you want to fight the RPF, go up in the hills and fight, but do not kill civilians.” They told him, “You are a Hutu. You must kill,” and told him to kill someone. He refused to do so, and was killed.

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Some Muslims offered to pay militias not to kill people being protected (Muslims or non-Muslims). Others said "You'll have to kill me first."

- Many Muslim community members organized into resistance movements to defend themselves and protect others against attacks from militias. Often non-Muslims joined them.

Example of Mabare:

The commune where Mabare is located was led by a sectarian Mayor who was an active proponent of the genocide. The genocide began throughout the commune the day after the late President Habyarimana's plane crash. The Muslim community in Mabare resisted the genocide to the point of defying the instructions of the authorities. Muslims organized themselves and went to the office of the district officer, asking for advice on what they should do. The district officer told them they should take the refugees to the district office. (All across Rwanda, people were killed at district offices in this way.) As one Mabare Muslim explained, "We refused to hand people over. I told him myself, 'We want to rescue these people. If you want to take their cows, go ahead, but let us protect the people.'"

The killing broke out first on the other side of Lake Mugesera. Mabare Muslims took their canoes and saved many Tutsis who were thrown in the water to drown. The news circulated in the area and most Tutsis from neighboring communities fled to Mabare. When they saw the Muslims were receptive, they hid in the mosque. As the only safe-haven for the hunted Tutsis and moderate Hutus in the area, the Mabare mosque became overly crowded by asylum seekers.

When the Interahamwe militia came to kill the people in Mabare around the mosque, the leaders of the mosque refused to hand them over. They asked, "Why should a Tutsi die?" Resistance was stiff. The Interhamwe killed the Muslim leader on the first day. The Muslims and refugees at the mosque continued to fight with Interahamwe for three days using traditional weapons, such as bows and arrows, and rocks. On the fourth day, police reinforcements armed with guns arrived and defeated the group at the mosque. Many people died in the confrontation, mainly the leaders of the resistance movement, and the mass of refugees. Survivors helped the wounded and escorted surviving refugees to RPF controlled territory. The community now speculates, "The Muslims tried their best. If the militia had not come in with three vehicles and guns, Muslims could have resisted until the end of the genocide."

Example of Rwamagana:

Hutu and Tutsi Muslims organized a defense to protect people in Rwamagana's Islamic quartier. As one person described, "A man called Ndahiro and his family were protected by a Muslim resistance group. His children, who were about to be thrown into a latrine to die, were rescued."

Example of Kibagabaga:

When the genocide broke out in Kigali, wanted (i.e. Tutsi) Muslims and non-Muslims gathered in the mosque compound under the Muslim leadership. As one described,

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"Kibagabaga Muslims of all ethnic groups refused any kind of division and remained united." When the Interhamwe militia tried to take the Tutsis, everyone there told them, "There is no Hutu, no Tutsi, we are all simply human beings." The leadership of the mosque refused to give up the Tutsis, and placed guards around the mosque. The group resisted the Interhamwe for three days. Meanwhile, Tutsis who were able to escape from other areas, including from churches, also fled to the mosque. The Presidential Guard then came in, and demanded that the Hutus separate themselves from the Tutsis. Everyone refused (including the Hutu Muslims who could have saved themselves). The guards are reported to have told the following to the killers' squad: "We know that you came here to kill. If that is what you want, please kill all of us but not a section of this community." When this "negotiating" did not work, the Presidential Guards shot into the group. Many were killed immediately, including several who were ethnic Hutus but who had refused, as they described, "to let the Hutu criminals to come in and kill Tutsis." Others disbanded, and were killed as they fled. Those who survived tried to help the wounded.

- Some Muslims took steps to pretend they were going along with the genocide, in order to defer suspicion and avoid attack, all the while protecting people.

Some Muslims chopped down banana trees and organized burials for the trunks, in order to pretend that they were burying people they had killed. In Rwamagana, people told us that they did this after the councilor had launched an appeal to his population that he wanted to "see Tutsi bodies lying all over the place."

Some Hutu Muslims infiltrated and spied on the militias in order to inform the Tutsis about the time of the killers' attacks, so that they could be prepared and hide elsewhere.

- Muslims went out of their way to bring people to safety.

Many Muslims organized rescue operations for Tutsi neighbors who were attacked by militias, and brought them to safe areas, protected by Muslims.

- Many also explained that those Muslims who did participate nearly always refrained from killing other Muslims. As several described, "This is proof that Muslims do not kill Muslims." We will discuss this in more detail along with the other exceptions, below.

The examples above were repeated to us across all the different Muslim communities. It is interesting to note that in the former settlement areas, people did not tend to hide in mosques, rather people hid in houses, where Muslims protected them by moving them from house to house. On the other hand, in areas of Muslim expansion—where Muslims tended to be more intermingled with non-Muslims—people grouped in mosques because, as one described, "They were afraid their neighbors could take advantage of the situation to kill them." In general, the former settlement areas were more passive in their non-

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participation, while the areas of Muslim expansion were more active in their resistance (Mabare and Kibagabaga, for example).

SECTION IV: WHY DID MUSLIMS ACT POSITIVELY DURING THE GENOCIDE?

How was the vast majority of the Muslim community able to respond positively in the face of national madness, rather than just select individuals? Why were Muslims, unlike most of the rest of the country, willing to put their identity as Muslims, or as human beings, as a priority over their ethnic identity?

Role of the Muslim Leadership

We begin by looking at the role of the Muslim leadership, since one distinct difference between the Muslim community and most of the rest of Rwanda is that the Muslim leadership actively spoke against the genocide. To understand the significance of this, we have to briefly consider the role of leadership in community action more broadly in Rwanda and in the Muslim community.

Was the leadership a big factor?

The role of leaders and authority figures in general in Rwanda is a significant factor, according to people we spoke with and many who write on Rwanda. Many claim that Rwandans' tendency to follow authority was one of the primary drivers of the genocide.

Many suggested that that same tendency towards obedience of authority turned to the positive—following the leaders who preached positive actions—allowed Muslims to protect and save Tutsis, rather than try to kill them. They reported that in Biryogo, for example, when the killings started, very few Muslims joined in, and they attributed this to the leadership having prepared people against the "temptation" towards violence, and having inoculated them against participating.

We heard a range of comments that supported people's emphasis on the role of leadership in influencing both positive and negative actions during the genocide, including:

- Some speculate that if the Muslim leadership had condoned violence, Muslims would have participated. As one Muslim said, "If Muslim religious leaders had behaved like other religious leaders, then Muslims would have participated in the genocide."
- Others speculated that if the Christian leadership had issued pastoral letters that condemned the violence and urged people not to participate, while there may have been small massacres, there would not have been a genocide to the extent it occurred.
- Still others say that "Even today, if the leaders asked Rwandans to kill again, there would be another genocide."

So there is widespread agreement that leaders in Rwanda influence people to participate or not to participate, and thus that the Muslim leadership's active non-participation was a significant factor in why communities acted positively.

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Factors Influencing Positive Actions of the Muslim Community

Having established that leadership appears to be a critical element in influencing communities, we should then try to understand two things:

- Why did the Muslim leadership urge positive actions?
- And why did the Muslim community follow their religious leaders over the state leadership?

There are a number of interrelated factors that influence the answers to these questions. These themes are outlined in more detail below, reflecting how Muslims explained their own actions, how non-Muslims understood Muslims' motivations, as well as our own analysis of these.

In brief: The first factor Muslims (both leadership and community members) cited for their non-participation in the genocide was the Koran, and the Islamic faith that teaches non-violence and non-ethnicity. The second factor cited was the community's separation from the political system which influenced them not to have a stake in the war. In addition, Muslims described themselves as a historically marginalized community, across multiple dimensions: political, physical, social, educational, and economic. This marginalization did three main things:

- It increased social cohesion among the community, as distinct from those who oppressed them.
- It meant that for the most part, those self-defining as Muslims were a very spiritual, faithful community, closely connected to their religious doctrine. (There were very few Muslims "in name only" because it was not socially easy to be Muslim, and there was little to be strategically gained or exploited by it.)
- It caused Muslims to identify with the plight of the Tutsis when the genocide began, as another community being persecuted unfairly, and by the same oppressor (the government).

These factors joined to decrease the importance of ethnicity, and to shape and push the community towards non-participation and protection rather than active violence.

Doctrine

The first reason Muslims gave for their non-participation was the role of the Islamic faith and the Koran. Three key teachings were most often cited: 1) that the Koran teaches non-violence, where killing one person is a sin equivalent to killing all of humanity; 2) that the Koran teaches not to differentiate based on labels, but rather that all people are equal; and 3) that the Koran teaches to protect the weak, and assist people who are discriminated against. These teachings are diametrically opposed to a genocide ideology.

It is important not to underestimate this, as it was mentioned first and repeated often; clearly, the Muslim community in Rwanda is closely grounded in their faith. However, many religions, including Christianity—a religious institution that was highly implicated

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in the Rwandan genocide—also condemn killing and preach to each follower to " love thy neighbor."

People cited three primary aspects of active teaching that contributed to the fact that the majority of Muslims chose to follow their faith at a time when many others were abandoning or redefining theirs.

- Praying together five times a day.

The fact that Muslims come together as a group many times a day to pray together reinforced faith by keeping it on people's minds. As well, people suggested that it became more difficult to fathom killing someone that you kneeled with several times a day.

- Ramadan

The genocide began just a few weeks after Ramadan, the holiest of Muslim periods, a one-month period that is a time for inner reflection, devotion to God, and self-control. During Ramadan, Muslims fast during the day as a means of purification and self-discipline, and as a means of identifying with those in need and developing sympathy for the less fortunate. As well, Ramadan emphasizes the strength of community, and Muslim ideals of sharing with others are amplified, as people eat the break-fast meal together, after sundown, and consistently share food with each other. People suggested that particularly during this period, the solidarity within the community as they all perform this ritual together is strong. Therefore, when the genocide began just a few weeks later, this strong cohesiveness within the Muslim community and the ideals of the Koran were still very present in people's minds.

- Sharing/social cohesion.

Social organization and cohesion are part of the Muslim doctrine. This is exhibited in many practices, such as, paying religious taxes as a means of sharing with the community, and sharing food (many explained that mothers will send their children with a pot of food over to someone else's home to share).

- Strong sense of devotion

Another element that many (both Muslims and non-Muslims) mentioned to us is that the Muslim community in Rwanda is by and large a very faithful community. As one non-Muslim described, "Muslims are really living their religion." There do not seem to be many people who are Muslims "in name only." People gave several reasons for this, including the active faith actions above. As well, the Muslim community in Rwanda has historically been marginalized and discriminated against, as discussed earlier, making it unlikely that there would be many "default" Muslims. Many people (Muslims and non-Muslims) described to us that this community-wide faithfulness is in contrast to the Christian community. While everyone recognizes that there are many faithful Christians in Rwanda, people suggested repeatedly that as a general demographic, the Christian community is much more secular and fragmented. This suggests two things: a) that the name "Muslim community" describes a relatively coherent community, and that members do self-identify as a part of that group (rather than being demographically a member of the group, but not self-identifying as being influenced or motivated by membership in that group), and b) that the members of the Muslim community are

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motivated and shaped predominantly by their faith (rather than being, for example, a businessman first and a Muslim second).

Political Separation and Marginalization

The other reason most frequently cited is that Muslims were politically marginalized. Unlike other religions that had close links between their clerics and government leaders, Muslim religious scholars did not have close formal or informal relationships with the government prior to the genocide. This separation was particularly true for Ansar Allah. AMUR had closer ties to the ruling government party (MRND), but these were only a few individuals, with low power positions. These AMUR representatives in government were not seen by most Muslims to represent their will or views, though it is not entirely clear how to understand this split between leadership and community in this instance. By and large, though, especially in comparison with other religious groups, Muslim religious leaders were not close with the MRND party leaders. As well, there were very few lay-Muslims (as opposed to religious leaders) who were in positions of public sector power. While there was a Muslim political party (Parti pour la Democratie Islamique) formed in the early 1990s, it had no representation at all. There were no Muslim members of parliament prior to the genocide, nor were there cabinet Ministers.

This relates partly to the fact that the Muslim settlements established in the 1920s were subject to their own administration, separate from the state leadership and political system. Muslims were subsequently kept outside of political developments in the country, with their own systems of leadership and authority developing simultaneously and separately. Both the first and second republics post-independence were seen to be Christian, and closely allied with the Christian (usually Catholic) church. Not only was the government perceived as favoring Christianity but also of excluding Muslim religious leadership at high levels. For example, many Muslims explained that at state functions Christian leaders would be invited to pray, but never Muslim clerics.

Many said this was a function of the history of Islam in Rwanda, particularly as compared with the history of Christianity's arrival in Rwanda. Islam came to Rwanda via Arab traders and fellow Africans from neighboring countries who immigrated as assistants to colonialists. These low-power people never established relationships of power with the government, nor did the higher-status, but distrusted, Arab traders. As one Muslim described, "Our colleagues in other religions were not able to make a clear line between religion and politics, because of the way the religion came into the country."

Many also suggested that Muslims were historically marginalized politically because the Muslim religious leadership had sided with the pro-Independence Tutsi government prior to independence. This meant that when the Belgian colonialists flipped their support to Hutus as they granted independence, Muslims were categorized with the Tutsis and persecuted, kept outside political sphere.

The effect of the separation was that the government did not influence or control either Muslim ideology or authority, which allowed the Muslim religious leaders to remain

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separate from the state agenda and preach peace not ethnicity. Since Muslim religious leaders were not involved in the political structure, they were not being drawn into the same divisive identity politics as the rest of the Rwandan power structure. As many reported, "The ideology of the killing came from the political leaders and high political institutions, and there were no Muslim political leaders." Muslim religious leaders who protested the genocide maintained their positions of authority within the community. Muslim religious leaders did not perceive themselves to have a stake in the violence, or any interests involved. As many described, "It wasn't our war."

We described earlier that prior to the genocide, Ansar approached AMUR to counsel them to remain separate from questions of politics and the increasing ethnic polarization. Why was Ansar successful in convincing AMUR, rather than vice versa? Some claim that AMUR's decision to avoid active involvement was strategic—due to uncertainty of who would win the war, they wanted to remain a bit distant. Some explain that Ansar has never felt themselves to be under the influence of AMUR, and therefore they would not have been convinced to switch positions, had the situation been reversed.

Social Marginalization

Both Muslims and non-Muslims recognized that, aside from political marginalization, there were many other ways Muslims were discriminated against—including through being forced to live in settlements, through discrimination in education, through subsequent economic marginalization—that created a feeling of social marginalization, recognized by both Muslims and non-Muslims. All of these factors combined to increase solidarity and cohesion amongst Muslims, and to decrease the importance of ethnicity. As many reported, "We as Muslims have no ethnic identity." If anything, many Muslims reported, they saw themselves as neither Hutu, Tutsi, nor Twa, but as a fourth ethnic group, because of the social segregation and discrimination against them and the fact that Islam builds unity around humanity and faith rather than other identity features.

Physical marginalization

Many reflected that the physical segregation initiated by settlements caused an increased sense of social community and cohesion, particularly when combined with other discriminatory factors, creating a strong sense of Muslim identity and group unity. This strong identity also resulted in a low level of betrayal among these close communities.

Many also commented that the fact that Muslims lived together also meant they could exchange ideas with each other easily (in normal times), and could continue to do so even as movement was restricted during the genocide. That is, those with positive inclinations did not become isolated in the midst of the negative genocide propaganda, but were able to build a critical mass of people located together and still able to talk together, advocating protection and non-participation.

As well, the fact that Muslims were living physically together allowed them pragmatically to defend themselves and protect others. For example, if someone was hiding in a Muslim home and the militia came for them, the person could be secreted off to a neighbor's house, where he or she would also be protected.

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Educational marginalization

The limitation of educational opportunities restricted Muslims' access to jobs and positions of power and authority within society. It increased a feeling of social marginalization, as the bulk of the community remained uneducated.

While not attending the mission school was a detrimental factor for the Muslim community in terms of building the community's capacity to position itself in social and political life, some reflected that not attending secondary school could have had a positive impact on Muslim non-participation in the genocide. Many have said that much of the worst divisive, ethnic polarization teaching occurred during primary and secondary school, and that schools were, as many described, "a breeding ground for the ideology of ethnic discrimination and Hutu fundamentalism." Avoiding that "brainwashing," many suggested, could have had a critical role in why Muslims were not willing to be engulfed by the propaganda in 1994. As one Muslim described, while it was a deprivation of rights, "it was also the opportunity not to be intoxicated with the ideology of division. We were able to avoid sectarian civic education, which protected against participation in the evils of the genocide."

(Some claim it was the combination of having both the leadership and the community not educated in divisive politics that made a critical difference. In other communities where the majority of the people were not educated, they explain, the leadership at least was educated, and therefore had been exposed to the divisive propaganda. By contrast, the Muslim leadership itself was not educated in these divisive politics.)

Social marginalization

Muslims in many ways were treated as a separate entity having nothing in common with the Rwandan community. The community itself was made up of many people with non-Rwandan ancestry, and thus had always encompassed more than just Hutus and Tutsis. Being disliked by Rwandans of both major ethnic groups cemented the feeling of brotherhood /sisterhood in exploitation, and increased the sense of common identity as Muslims, as set against those discriminating against them. This also caused a feeling among the Muslim community of identification with the plight of the Tutsis after Independence, as another community being persecuted unfairly, and by the same oppressor (the government).

Intermarriage

Many people cited as a reason for Muslim non-participation in the genocide that there is a lot of intermarriage (between Tutsis and Hutus) amongst the Muslim population. They reported that most Muslim couples are of mixed ethnicity, and that children therefore are a mixture. Some feel that this intermarriage was a critical element in shaping the identity of the community. They underline that intermarriage was rooted in a deliberate emphasis on multi-ethnicity and diversity within the community, and that people were taught to accept and love each other with this diversity. This then was a deterrent, many say, to the genocide ideology. And when it came to actively killing, many speculate that Muslim youth were less likely to get involved because for most of them it would have meant

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killing one of their parents or their kin. As well, people suggested, many Muslims felt it was their duty to protect their extended family members, and thus brought in and protected their Tutsi in-laws.

It is not clear how to interpret this. Mixed marriages are common across Rwanda, not just among Muslims. It is not clear if there is really a difference of intermarriage statistics within the Muslim community. Intermarriage did not serve as a deterrent elsewhere in Rwanda. In fact, there are many cases of people who killed members of their own families. An alternative interpretation is that intermarriage had a positive influence on Hutu actions across the country, but that the examples people talk about are the extreme examples.

History

The historical understanding of the Muslim community's identity was also a factor. There were several elements of shared history that Muslims described. As discussed above, Muslims described themselves repeatedly as a community that had historically been discriminated against and marginalized.

Muslims also all talked about how historically in other massacres, Muslims had protected and saved people. Many Muslims described to us their actions in 1994 was inspired by their parents' and grandparents' positive actions in 1959, which was the time of the first large-scale massacres of Tutsis, at which point Muslims widely protected Tutsis, and helped them gain asylum.

Muslims also talked about the fact that Burundian Muslims behaved in the same ways during the violence and massacres there (which are related to many of the same factors in Rwanda). Thus, there is a community identity within the community based on history that "Muslims do not get involved in these sorts of events."

Muslims also use their history as a means of understanding why they too would be "hated" and discriminated against by the Hutu government. They claim that the "historical affinity" between the Tutsis and the Muslims is what "triggered the hatred of the Hutus towards the Muslims," who had been historically perceived as the allies of the Tutsis. Most Muslims supported the predominately Tutsi political party during the struggle for independence, and again those Muslims who supported a political party in the 1990s supported the Liberal Party, which was considered the internal wing of the predominately-Tutsi RPF. So overall it looked as though Muslims were consistently in alliance with the Tutsis in the last 50 years.

Some claim that the historic solidarity between the Tutsis and Muslims also helps explain Muslims' predisposition to favorable attitudes towards Tutsis during the genocide. This suggests that Muslims were motivated by more than just a neutral anti-violence stance. This is not to imply, though, that if the violence had been reversed and Tutsis had advocated slaughter of Hutus, Muslims would have participated as a community because of this affinity. Rather, people suggest that this historic solidarity strengthened their resistance to anti-Tutsi, Hutu-power ideology. Some suggest this historic solidarity also

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influenced the close relationships that have developed between the current predominantly Tutsi government and the Muslim community. For example, there was a Muslim Special Advisor to the President, and there is a Muslim Cabinet Minister and three Members of Parliament as well.

So, Why Did Muslims Follow Their Religious Leadership Over State Leadership?

It is clear that the vast majority of Muslims followed the teachings and ideology of their religious leaders over the state leaders regarding the genocide. This is related to the nexus of the factors above. Official policy a century earlier had put Muslims as the political leaders, as well as religious leaders, of their own communities; thus Muslims had a history of not being subject to state policy. Also Muslim leaders were actively present in Muslim communities, in schools, during daily prayers, and on the longer Friday afternoon prayers. By contrast, state authority figures were comparatively absent. Since Muslims lived physically together, they saw these religious leaders a lot, and had a concentration of Muslim fellowship around them.

The messages being conveyed by Imams therefore carried more weight for most Muslims than the negative propaganda being circulated on the radio. In contrast to the nation-wide power vacuum—confusion and inconsistency—the positive messages preached by Imams and reinforced by community leaders were particularly strong. Furthermore, the fact that Muslim settlements were relatively closed communities made it easier to keep a different mood in the settlement. As one described, “These elements laid the groundwork for positive actions.”

As one Muslim described, “The Muslim actions were not a coordinated action. The prevention happened, but during the genocide, there was not communication. It was spontaneous actions. The vast majority responded positively.”

SECTION V: CHRISTIANITY IN RWANDA AS A COUNTER EXAMPLE

Much has been written about the role of the Christian churches during the genocide. It is not our intention to delve into this in detail, nor did we gather explicit evidence around it. However we want to highlight two key themes that emerged through our two weeks of conversations, which by comparison and contrast illuminate Muslim actions and the motivations and reasons behind it.

First and foremost, everyone pointed out that Christian churches in Rwanda, which in many cases has been understood to have participated quite actively in the genocide, were traditionally aligned very closely with the government. Christianity was brought to Rwanda by missionaries who were part of the colonial and imperial package of the West. They immediately established relationships with the Rwandan king, and while the first king did not convert, the second was baptized, at which point much of the rest of Rwanda followed suit. Since that time, the church and the government were closely connected.

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This perception of closeness was described as, "At one point in time, the Church and the state were two arms of the same body."

Secondly, many people (including many Christians) suggested that a lot of people in Rwanda who are called Christians are "Sunday Christians," or "Christians in name only"—that is, they suggest that many people called Christians are not very religious, and therefore it's a misnomer to associate their participation with the Christian faith or community. Several people offered opinions on why the Christian community is perhaps less faithful. One priest suggested that Christianity never really took root with many people in Rwanda , but that people called themselves Christians and got baptized because the king did (prior to Independence). He felt that there remained a vacuum among many Rwandans, since Colonialism along with Christianity had erased and destroyed much of the traditional value system without sufficiently replacing it. He suggested that while many people call themselves Christians, they have only a perfunctory knowledge of the ideals and rules of Christianity, and calling them Christians is misleading.

We did not hear of examples of Muslim leadership trying to influence their Christian colleagues, or of any other coordinated cross-faith resistance action by leaders or community members.

SECTION VI: EXCEPTIONS: MUSLIMS WHO DID PARTICIPATE

Here we discuss briefly those Muslims who did participate in the genocide to see how the Muslim community explains the actions of those "deviant" Muslims.

Muslims in Leadership Positions

There were two members of government who participated, and one leader in the private sector. While Muslims, these people were not religious leaders of the community. (It is debatable the extent to which they were seen as respected leaders at all within the Muslim community. People now for the most part say they were not, as discussed below, but it is not evident if they felt differently about the people prior to the genocide.)

- Jumatatu Nzeyimana, Advisor to the Minister for Internal Affairs. Nzeyimana is a suspect, but has not been arrested. He is not alleged to have killed anyone, but was an important leader in the Ministry that carried out the genocide.

However, Muslims say Nzeyimana is not seen as having acted in that position "as a Muslim"—that is, he was not acting on behalf of the community.

- Amri Karekezi, Administrator of Biryogo. Everyone agrees that Karekezi participated with vigor, inciting people from his position as a local leader to participate, sometimes even leading attacks. They claim that even if he did not pull the trigger, he ordered others to. He fled to Tanzania after the genocide, and came back before the mass return in 1996. He was arrested just after his return.

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He is in jail, and is expected to go through the Gacaca[3] process like other genocide suspects.

The Muslim community quickly admits that Karekezi is a Muslim who participated. Many said that he pretended to represent the Muslim community, telling the government that he spoke on their behalf, telling them that he would take their concerns to government. Some suggest that he was at the time closely linked with AMUR.

However, Muslims claim that he did not represent them or their views, and that they feared him. As many described, "While he was Muslim, he was first and foremost a member of the genocidal government." One element that gives weight to the comment that he was not seen by Muslims as acting on behalf of Muslims or Islam is that people reportedly did not respond to his appeals to participate in the genocide. Non-Muslims as well said they did not see him as Muslim. He was "already serving other interests."

Some say he explained himself as having become "non-Muslim" while carrying out these acts. We heard a story more than once of people who came up to him during the genocide and said "Asalaam Aleikum"— the traditional Muslim greeting—and he said "Don't say that to me." A current high-ranking government leader explained, "Now, I've talked to him in person. He puts on his cap, and says he is a good Muslim, though he took some time off from Islam."

- Hassan Ngeze, head of the pro-Hutu inflammatory propagandist newspaper *Kangura.*

Ngeze was head of a newspaper that incited some of the worst ethnic polarization, including the infamous "Hutu 10 Commandments," which told Hutus among other things to have unity and solidarity against their common Tutsi enemy, including the 8th commandment that "Hutus must stop having mercy on the Tutsis." Ngeze's name only came up in one interview, though he has been mentioned in other texts written about the genocide (including Gourevitch's book). Those who did discuss him mentioned that he was not seen as a Muslim; for example, they had never seen him in a mosque, not even during Ramadan (which might explain why he did not come up as an example). As one man described, "He has a Muslim name and a Muslim family, but he did not pray, he did not share anything with the community, so really he was Muslim in name only." Gourevitch writes about him that "Although he was a practicing member of Rwanda's small Muslim community…Ngeze's true religion was 'Hutuness'"(Gourevitch 1998:87).

<u>Muslim Community Members</u>

In each community we went into, people told us stories of the few Muslims who had behaved badly. For example:

- Some "bad Muslims" conspired with the Interhamwe militias, and gave away hiding places.

[3] Gacaca trials are grassroots community courts that have been implemented across Rwanda to handle the large number of genocide suspects.

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- Some people "broke out of the Muslim solidarity and joined the Interhamwe militia."
- Some Muslims were willing to kill non-Muslims, but not Muslims. As one person said in Biryogo, "There were a few Muslims here who went and followed the killers, but they went away and killed elsewhere." One Muslim Interhamwe member in Rwamagana told a Tutsi that if he became a Muslim, he would not kill him. The man converted, and was saved.

Muslims and many non-Muslims suggested that those Muslims who took part in the killings did it on their own, rather than as members of the community. The community dissociates itself from those who participated.

Some claim that those who were involved were not really Muslims to begin with. Many said, "If you are in a position of leadership and you are supporting these beliefs, then you are not really Muslim." We also commonly heard, "If you look at the Muslims in prisons, generally they were only the ones who were superficial Muslims. Generally when people say that there are Muslims in prison, they are basing it on their names being Muslim names, not on whether those people were ever strong practicing Muslims." (We can argue, though, that evidently, nor were those elements of the community strong enough to deter everyone's negative actions! People commonly responded that "even the best families can have a deviant child.")

Some suggested that those Muslims who did participate were people who had already been at the margins of the Muslim community, and therefore did not fully believe in the principles that caused solidarity in the rest of the community. They explain that those who participated in the genocide did not reflect Islam and its values (spiritually and socially) in everyday life prior to the genocide either, so they were Muslims in name only.

The example of the Interhamwe member who would not kill someone who converted to Islam is interesting in that it reflects an ambivalence: elements of his Muslim identity prevented him from killing the man immediately; yet he was countering the fundamental principles of Islam in even considering the option of violence, and in forcing conversions.

Many suggested that those Muslims who did join the Interhamwe, even though they were turning away from Islam, joined for different reasons than other Rwandans. They explained, "Those who went into the genocide to protect their families were guided only by love of their families," rather than hatred or fear of Tutsis. There was a provocative comment made that if other religions had protected their own the ways Muslims protected themselves, there would not have been a genocide.

SECTION VII: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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In general, it is clear to us that the Muslim community behaved in a way that was significantly different from the rest of the country. When the appeal for genocide was launched, Muslims did not feel caught up in the genocidal agenda because of the following interconnected factors:

- Lack of direct involvement in the political strife of the country.
- A lifestyle that reflected solidarity around faith, not Hutu or Tutsi ethnic identity.
- Lived faith on the basis of Islamic principles including non-violence, non-discrimination, and helping the oppressed.
- Memory of the political and social relationships with Tutsis in the past.
- High prevalence of mixed Hutu-Tutsi marriages.

Interwoven above are ideas about the role of *identity* (how the community understands itself) and how Muslims understand their own *history*, and use it to justify their actions.

Muslims and non-Muslims cited the community's social cohesion as a key defining characteristic of the Muslim community—in a non-Muslim's words, "There is more cohesion among them than among others." This was important both in terms of the strength of community amongst Muslims that erased ethnicity as a relevant defining factor, and in the distinction from the rest of Rwandans that allowed them to feel that "It's not our war."

The prevention actions taken by the Muslim leadership seem to be critical. Many suggested that once the genocide started "everyone lost their morals" and social structures broke down so there was little anyone could do. This emphasizes the importance of inoculation, communication, and moral leadership prior to the outbreak of violence.

Some speculate that the reason the Muslims were able to "get away with" behaving in ways that got other people killed (most people were killed for active resistance) is because they were not seen as sufficiently threatening. Due to the small size of the community, their lack of political power, and what some see as the small scale of their resistance, some suggest that therefore the government did not clamp down on them as much as on others. For example, people say that there were fewer people seeking refuge in mosques than in churches and district offices, so they were less noticed. If they had been more noticed, perhaps the government would have "bothered" to bring in the heavier militias more often, such as in the situation in Mabare, which would have resulted in more deaths at mosques, less effective resistance, and more risks and pressure on the non-wanted Muslims who were protecting people. There are many stories of where the government applied pressure to leaders who were resisting, and therefore "brought the genocide," as people explained it, to communities that were otherwise not participating. For example, the Governor of the Province of Butare for several days actively called upon people not to participate, and they followed his lead; the Presidential Guard then came in, killed him, incited people to start killing, and they did. If the government had applied similar pressure to the Muslim leadership, would things have changed? (On the other hand, we see from the Mabare example that even when the Muslim resistance

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leadership was killed, the rest of the Muslims continued their struggle, ultimately losing their lives. Thus, intimidation did not, in this particular case, cause them to change their actions.)

Speculation: What About Now? Would It Happen the Same Way?

Since the genocide, a number of the dynamics and factors discussed above have changed within the Muslim community. It is important to consider whether things would play out in the same way, given the new dynamics. The shifting factors include the following:

- With the reversal of some of the discriminatory policies, Muslims have increased access to schooling, jobs, and government positions.
- Muslims are now taking an increasing role in the government. There is a Muslim Member of the Cabinet i.e. a full Minister, three members of Parliament, and the Special Advisor to the President is Muslim, for example. They are now participating in political parties and processes.
- Also, some "established" Muslims are moving out of the former settlement communities as they have more money, and buying homes elsewhere. As new people are being converted to Islam**,** and staying in their rural scattered homes, this dilutes the physical concentration of the Muslim community in given locations.
- Some cite as the biggest difference that there is an increasing power struggle between AMUR and Ansar Allah. Feelings of antagonism and animosity are prevalent, and violence has even been used in some cases.

  Most describe it as an increasing struggle for power, where AMUR, which had been the only voice for Muslims, feels threatened by the encroachment of Ansar and other Muslim organizations on their power. As one described, AMUR aspires to be the one leader of a unified Muslim community. The fact that Ansar has attempted to take some of this authority and power has directly confronted AMUR and the new Muslim elite/ politicians (whose affiliation and constituency varies).

  This struggle for power has at times gotten vicious, even violent. For example, we were told that in 1996, the Mufti of Rwanda sentenced the leader of a federation of Muslim organizations (including Ansar Allah) to death, on the premise that in the history of Islam, there were never two leaders at the same time. (He did not have the authority to implement this sentence.) As well, we were told, the leader of one of the groups in the federation was wrongly accused by AMUR of involvement in the genocide, and imprisoned for three weeks before being released for lack of evidence. AMUR closed many Ansar Allah mosques, and there were incidents of death threats and violence. We also heard examples of where some Muslim leadership were using state channels to advance their power struggle. For example, some explained that AMUR had gone to court to try to dissolve Ansar, but the proposal was rejected.

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Would these shifting factors change Muslims' actions, if the genocide were to happen again? Some say no, that these are just a few of the factors, and that the Muslim doctrine is the most important factor, and it has not (and will not) change. Many people say the factors above are all interrelated, and that changing any one of them would not change the way that the community behaved in general.

Others say yes, it would make a big difference, particularly the elements of political power and competing interests. Some feel that isolation from power was a tremendous influence on Muslims' non-active involvement into the genocide. Given the perceived importance of leadership, discussed earlier, the increasing role of leadership in questions of power could be a critical "tipping point." As one described, "Muslims like every other faith community have already tasted the sweetness of the dividends of power and political participation. They are likely to do everything possible to keep and expand the power and privileges they have already acquired. The participation of Muslims in public life has changed the stand of Muslims vis-à-vis any other conflict that might emerge. We cannot say that Muslims would play a prominent role, but it looks like it would be very difficult for them to remain distant and positive."

Other Examples of Positive Community Actions

There were other examples of positive community behavior in Rwanda that people mentioned to us, but which we did not get to explore in full detail.

- Giti Commune: People talk about a commune called Giti where no one participated. Apparently there is a sign outside the town saying "Welcome to Giti, the only commune that did not participate in the genocide." Some speculate that they were spared because the RPF arrived there extremely early.
- The Batwa people, the third ethnic group in Rwanda, at 1%, are seen to have not participated, or have participated "weakly."
- The mayor and population of Mugina commune.

On the surface, it appears that being a minority and therefore outside the direct radar of the genocidal leadership is important. What other factors are common with these other communities? It would be interesting to explore these other communities to see what, within the same context of Rwanda, are other similarities and differences.

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Appendix 1: Map of Rwanda

(Note: Biryogo and Kibagabaga are located in Kigali.)

(Map adapted from map in MTN Rwandacell advertisement)

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Appendix 2: Brief Information on Interview Communities

Biryogo
The community of Biryogo is located in Kigali. It was established as a Muslim settlement in 1937 when Belgian colonial rulers relocated the Muslim settlement of Matongoni (currently Kigali City Commercial Area) in order to vacate the Center of Kigali. Muslims in Biryogo were originally petty traders, cooks and other staff of the colonial administration, shop assistants in Arab and Indian shops. The community increased as others converted to Islam and as Kigali City population increased.

Rwamagana
Rwamagana is located 60 kilometers East of Kigali in the province of Kibungo. When the Matongoni Muslim settlement in Kigali was moved to Biryogo in 1937 (above), a section of the Arab and Indian traders chose to move to Rwamagana, encouraged by the substantial population there that it had high business potential. The Arab traders and business owners established their presence in the center of Rwamagana, bringing with them their Muslim staff, most of whom were foreigners (Tanzanians and Congolese). Other Rwandans in Rwamagana subsequently converted to Islam. During the anti-Tutsi violence after independence in 1962, the entire Muslim settlement of Rwamagana was set on fire, and many Muslims ran into exile. Some did not return until after the genocide.

Mabare
Mabare is a rural community located 100 kilometers East of Kigali. It is a very new Muslim area. Islam came to Mabare in 1982, when two young men from Mabare spent time in Rwamagana, converted to Islam, then returned. Additional people converted, and soon after, Ansar Allah began missionary work there. The community was mixed in social-ethnic composition, with Muslims living side-by-side with non-Muslims. It is made up of farmers (which is distinctly different than the older Muslim settlements, made up of traders and businessmen). Mabare is not a former settlement area. The Muslims there were not foreigners, but Rwandans who had lived there for generations.

Mugandamure
Mugandamure is located 100 kilometers South of Kigali. It was established as a settlement area in the early 1950s. It is a village of approximately 3,000 inhabitants, almost all of whom are Muslims.

Kibagabaga
Kibagabaga is located in the peripheral part of urban Kigali. It is a rural community despite the fact that it is administratively located in urban Kigali. Its population is approximately 3,000 people, only a small portion of which are Muslims. Islam began in Kibagabaga early in the century, but was dormant until 1982 when Ansar Allah preachers started to work in the area.

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