

Ten years ago, we launched the Gacaca courts as our answer to the daunting issue of post-genocide justice and the rebuilding of our nation. . .

Gacaca, granted, had its imperfections. It received criticism both from within and outside Rwanda, yet those criticizing offered no viable alternatives that could deliver the results we needed. . .

Let's reflect for a moment, on the immediate aftermath of the genocide, and the amount of challenges our country faced, many of which tested us all to the limit. One of these challenges was how to provide redress for victims, hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes, and restore harmony among Rwandans.

Given the magnitude of the problem, including the numbers involved and limited resources at our disposal, conventional justice as we know it could not deliver the results that we sought. We had three choices: first was the more dangerous path of revenge, or secondly, grant general amnesty, both of which would have led to further anarchy and destruction. But we chose the third and more difficult course of dealing with the matter decisively and restoring the unity and integrity of the nation.

We turned to Gacaca, our traditional conflict resolution mechanism, and adapted it to respond to the challenges facing us. . .

Equally, the value and effectiveness of Gacaca will be measured against the record of other courts, principally the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The ICTR has tried about sixty cases, cost about 1.7 billion dollars and left justice wanting.

Yet, at significantly less cost, the Gacaca process has had the highest impact in terms of cases handled, and has delivered justice and reconciliation at a much higher scale. . .

Gacaca has empowered Rwandans in ways few could have envisaged. It has illustrated the liberating value of truth. When truth came out in court, from both the perpetrators and survivors of genocide, from witnesses and the community – freely, not at the prompting or tutoring of paid lawyers – it set everyone free and prepared the ground for the restoration of social harmony.

-Kagame, Paul, "Speech at closing of the Gacaca" (2012) excerpt.