Retired Major General Clayton Boanubah Yaache of Ghana, a former UN peacekeeper during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, reflected on the courage that kept him and his colleagues in Rwanda while most UN troops withdrew.

Speaking at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, Gen. Yaache told youth that leaving the country would have meant abandoning innocent civilians and violating their oath as soldiers.

“We did not stay in Rwanda because of superior weapons or special orders,” he said. “We stayed because something inside us said leaving would mean ignoring our shared humanity.”

Gen. Yaache is part of a small group of African UN soldiers from Ghana and Senegal who remained in Rwanda despite the withdrawal of most UN forces. This week, the retired officers are visiting Rwanda to engage youth in discussions about courage, humanity, and moral steadfastness.

Brigadier General Ronald Rwivanga, spokesperson for the Rwanda Defence Force, praised the former UN troops for risking their lives to protect civilians. “When Belgium withdrew its soldiers and pushed for the dissolution of UNAMIR, the Ghanaian and Senegalese troops chose to uphold their duty, often putting themselves in grave danger to save Rwandans targeted for extermination,” he said.

During the genocide, Ghanaian troops are credited with saving more than 30,000 lives. Brig. Gen. Rwivanga highlighted Capt. Mbaye, a Senegalese officer who repeatedly risked his life to protect Tutsi civilians and ultimately died in the line of duty.

Madame Ingabire Veneranda, Executive Director of MINUBUMWE, Rwanda’s anti-genocide denial organization, thanked the veterans for returning to Rwanda, noting their visit reflects a commitment to reconciliation and building a peaceful future.

The visiting officers include Maj. Gen. Yaache, Brig. Gen. Martin Owusu-Ababio, Brig. Gen. Elhadji Babacar Faye, Major Peter Sosi, and retired warrant officers Lucas Norvihoho and Sampson Agyare. Over a seven-day visit, they are meeting youth, Rwandan soldiers, and commemorating the genocide.

Friday’s discussions carried the theme: *“Inspiring Tomorrow’s Youth to Courage and Humanity.”*

Gen. Yaache reflected on the dangers they faced when UNAMIR was undermined in April 1994. “Rwanda taught us that a soldier’s highest duty is not only to obey orders but to defend life itself,” he said.

In 2022, President Paul Kagame honored Ghanaian peacekeepers for their courage, awarding Maj. Gen. Henry Kwami Anyidoho and Maj. Gen. Joseph Adinkra for their outstanding service during the genocide.