More than 31 years after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the United Nations continues to spend thousands of dollars each year on the upkeep of former ICTR defendants who remain under house arrest in Niger.

The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which inherited the work of the now-defunct International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), pays $10,000 annually to each of five Rwandans living in Niamey, along with housing costs.

The men include Major François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye, former Labor Minister Prosper Mugiraneza, Col. Alphonse Nteziryayo, André Ntagerura, and Capt. Innocent Sagahutu. All were tried in Arusha for genocide-related crimes, with some acquitted and others released after serving reduced sentences.

Three others are Protais Zigiranyirazo, brother-in-law of former President Juvénal Habyarimana, Lt. Col. Tharcisse Muvunyi, and Lt. Col. Anatole Nsengiyumva also relocated to Niger but later died of illness.

Although the relocation agreement envisioned they would eventually live freely in Niamey, Niger seized their travel documents in December 2021 and confined them to rented houses under close supervision. Authorities considered expelling them but backed down after consultations with the U.N.

Rwanda has offered to receive them, promising to respect their rights, but the group has refused, saying they want resettlement in a third country. Until then, the IRMCT remains responsible for their welfare.

Lawyer Peter Robinson argued this month that their confinement prevents them from working and justifies continued support. “Major Nzuwonemeye still cannot sustain himself as envisioned in the relocation agreement,” he said. “Without additional funds for upkeep and rent, he will not be able to survive another year in Niger.”

The men, who have each received $10,000 annually for the past three years, are now requesting $12,400 for 2026, citing a 24% rise in the cost of living in Niamey since 2022.

The case underscores the lingering legacy of the ICTR, which closed nearly a decade ago, but still leaves the U.N. grappling with the fate of acquitted and

released defendants.