The spokesperson of Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) has warned that the resurgence of hate speech and ethnic targeting in parts of the region reflects dangerous patterns reminiscent of those that led to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Brig. Gen. Ronald Rwivanga made the remarks on Friday during a commemoration event marking the 32nd anniversary of the genocide, attended by employees of the Office of the Auditor General and the Rwanda Revenue Authority.

Rwivanga said the genocide was not a sudden event triggered by the April 1994 shooting down of then-President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane, but the result of a long process that unfolded over decades.

He said research shows genocide develops through identifiable stages, arguing that Rwanda experienced such a progression through political, social, and institutional actions that deepened divisions over time.

Rwivanga outlined what he described as 10 stages leading to the genocide, beginning with the creation of ethnic divisions and the portrayal of Tutsis as outsiders. He cited the 1959 violence and displacement of Tutsis as an early consequence of such divisions.

He said later stages included the introduction of ethnic identity cards, systemic discrimination in education and employment, and policies that restricted rights based on ethnicity.

The spokesperson also pointed to the use of dehumanizing language, including terms such as "inyenzi," and the organization and training of militias such as the Interahamwe in the early 1990s.

He said escalation included the killing of political figures who opposed extremist ideology, including then-Prime Minister Agathe Uwiringiyimana, as well as efforts to identify and locate Tutsi households across the country ahead of the 1994 killings.

According to Rwivanga, the genocide itself was carried out in a coordinated and systematic manner, with participation or support from authorities, and was followed by continued denial by some individuals who claim it either did not occur or was mutual violence between ethnic groups.

He said Rwanda’s history explains its strong stance against genocide ideology and ethnic division, adding that vigilance remains necessary.

Rwivanga also expressed concern over what he described as similar patterns emerging in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where he said Banyamulenge and other Kinyarwanda-speaking communities face discrimination and forced displacement linked to their identity.

He warned that rhetoric telling people to leave areas where they have lived for generations based on ethnicity echoes dangerous patterns from Rwanda’s past.

Rwanda has repeatedly accused armed groups and some actors in eastern Congo of promoting ethnic discrimination, allegations that Congolese authorities have disputed.