

Minister of Justice, Dr. Emmanuel Ugirashebuja, has urged citizens and leaders to take shared responsibility in protecting human rights, saying the country's own history marked by discrimination and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi remains its clearest lesson on the consequences of violating fundamental freedoms.

Ugirashebuja delivered the remarks Dec. 10 during the national celebration of International Human Rights Day, held in Gihundwe Sector of Rusizi District.

The event, organized by the National Commission for Human Rights, marked Rwanda's 26th observance of the day and coincided with the 77th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

He said Rwanda's past provides an undeniable reminder of what happens when human rights are ignored or abused.

"Our country went through many hardships," he said. "We don't need to learn lessons from elsewhere. What we experienced teaches us the value of protecting human rights and the danger of violating them because of someone's origin or identity."

Ugirashebuja said the genocide placed a long-term responsibility on the nation to safeguard unity and ensure that no one is denied their rights based on who they are or where they come from.

The Minister pointed to Rusizi part of the former Cyangugu region as an example of an area where residents once faced discrimination tied to birthplace.

"These are events we never want to repeat," he said. "When rights are violated, conflict follows, and conflict leads to fear and instability. That is why the Government of National Unity works to protect the rights of every individual, whether Rwandan or another resident."

He added that Rwanda's efforts must go beyond the written text of international declarations, emphasizing that rights protection requires daily action and a commitment shared across society.

Western Province Governor Ntibitura Jean Bosco echoed the message, saying the Universal Declaration's inclusion of responsibilities shows that every person plays a role in safeguarding others' rights. He said leadership positions should never be used to mistreat citizens.

“A leader who violates the rights of others is misusing the authority they were given,” he said. “Leaders should protect the rights of those entrusted to them. We must ensure that human rights are respected and teach communities to stand up for them.”