

A new legal complaint filed in Paris is placing the Bank of France under heightened scrutiny, as human rights advocates allege the institution authorized financial transfers that may have helped fund military equipment in the months surrounding the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

According to reporting by *Libération* and Radio France's investigative unit, attorneys Matilda Ferey and Joseph Breham submitted the complaint Dec. 4 to a senior investigating judge in the Paris court's crimes-against-humanity unit. The filing was made on behalf of three civil parties: Dafroza and Alain Gauthier and the Collective of Civil Parties for Rwanda, or CPCR.

Researchers who examined historical archives say the Bank of France facilitated financial transactions for the Rwandan government in the early 1990s, a period marked by escalating political and ethnic violence. The complaint argues the bank either failed to impose appropriate safeguards or continued authorizing questionable transfers even as international alerts intensified.

Central to the case are seven transfers made from an account belonging to the National Bank of Rwanda and held at the Bank of France between May and August 1994. The transactions totaled 3.17 million French francs — about €486,000, or \$571,000 — and are suspected of having been used to purchase communication equipment and weapons. The movement of funds came despite a U.N. arms embargo imposed on Rwanda on May 17 of that year.

Plaintiffs say the transfers raise significant questions about financial oversight and whether the bank played an indirect role in enabling illicit procurement during the height of the genocide. The filing cites testimony from international arms-trafficking expert Kathi Lynn Austin, who said banks received “precise instructions” to facilitate transfers to the Rwandan central bank's account in Paris. She said the pattern of activity should have prompted immediate concern.

Alain Gauthier criticized what he described as the persistent “slowness” of French judicial responses to genocide-related cases, noting that a similar 2017 complaint against BNP Paribas remains inactive.

Advocacy groups argue that such financial operations may have strengthened the Rwandan regime that went on to orchestrate the killing of more than 800,000 people.

The Bank of France has not issued a detailed response. It said it holds no record of the transfers, explaining that such documents are routinely destroyed after 10 years, and added that the amounts cited “could be consistent with operational expenses.”