Rwanda’s minister for national unity and civic engagement, Jean-Damascène Bizimana said Tuesday that the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi was the outcome of decades of political division and ideology, not a sudden outbreak of violence.

Minister Bizimana made the remarks during ceremonies marking the 32nd anniversary of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Bugesera District, where thousands of victims were killed at Rebero Hill in Mayange and surrounding areas.

Dr Bizimana said the genocide was the result of a long process of exclusion and hatred embedded in state policy under successive governments. He cited the administrations of former presidents Grégoire Kayibanda and Juvénal Habyarimana, saying their governments institutionalized ethnic division.

Jean-Damascène Bizimana, Minister for National unity and Civic Engagement

He said genocide should be understood as a deliberate political project rather than an isolated event, adding that its defining feature is intent, not numbers.

According to Bizimana, discriminatory policies over decades marginalized Tutsi communities, including restrictions on education and political participation, which he said contributed to the conditions that led to the 1994 killings.

He urged parents to teach children values of unity, patriotism and integrity, as well as the history of the genocide, to ensure it is never repeated. He also warned against passing on ideologies of hatred and division, saying they harm future generations.

Bugesera District Mayor Richard Mutabazi said the resilience shown by Tutsi who took refuge on Rebero Hill should be remembered as part of the country’s historical legacy and passed on to younger generations.