

President Paul Kagame and first lady Jeannette Kagame on Sunday led national leaders and diplomats in honoring Rwanda's heroes during a wreath-laying ceremony at the Heroes Monument in Kigali, marking the country's annual Heroes Day.

The ceremony took place Feb. 1, 2026, at Heroes Square in the Remera neighborhood, where the president and first lady laid wreaths and bowed in silence to pay tribute to men and women recognized for their sacrifice, courage and service to the nation.

Heroes Day is observed each year on February 1 is dedicated to commemorating individuals whose actions played a defining role in Rwanda's history and development. This year's observance marked the 32nd commemoration under the theme, "Heroism and Unity of Rwandans: Pillars of Development."



Senior government and security officials attended the ceremony, including Prime Minister Justin Nsekiyumuva; Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Gertrude Kazarwa; Senate President François-Xavier Kalinda; Chief Justice Domitilla Mukantaganzwa; Chief of Defense Staff Gen. Mubarak Muganga; and Inspector General of Police Felix Namuhoranya. Diplomats accredited to Rwanda also laid wreaths in honor of the national heroes.

Rwanda recognizes its heroes in three categories: Imanzi, Imena and Ingenzi.

The Imanzi category includes heroes who are no longer alive. Among them is the Unknown Soldier, representing all soldiers who died defending the country. The category also includes Maj. Gen. Fred Gisa Rwigema, a key figure in the liberation struggle that began on Oct. 1, 1990.

The Imena category honors individuals recognized for exceptional bravery and moral courage. Those honored include King Mutara III Rudahigwa, Charles Léon Pierre; political activist Michel Rwagasana; former Prime Minister Agatha Uwilingiyimana; Félicité Niyitegeka, who saved lives during the 1994 genocide; and the students of Nyange Secondary School, remembered for refusing to be divided along ethnic lines.

No hero has yet been officially placed in the Ingenzi category, though authorities say research is ongoing.

Heroes Day events across the country are intended to promote national unity, patriotism and reflection on Rwanda's path toward peace and development.