The National Public Prosecution office has said on Wednesday (Oct 20) that it appealed against the verdict in the trial of Paul Rusesabagina and 20 others convicted of terrorism, which was read on September 20, 2021.

Rusesabagina, 67, and his associates accused were convicted and sentenced on September 20 for terrorism and involvement in a rebel group blamed for deadly gun, grenade and arson attacks in Rwanda in 2018 and 2019. Nine people were killed during the attacks, while others were left injured and property looted or destroyed.

A spokesman for the Rwandan Prosecution, Nkusi Faustin, told reporters that they had appealed the verdict. “We have appealed the case, and more will be said in court,” he said.

It was not clear whether prosecutors were appealing the sentence itself or the wider ruling.

The 67-year-old former hotelier is credited for saving over 1,200 lives during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, whose actions inspired the Hollywood film Hotel Rwanda, could face life imprisonment if the prosecution wins the appeal.

Prosecutors had sought a sentence of life in prison for Rusesabagina, the former Kigali hotel manager who was accused of backing a rebel group blamed for a spate of attacks in Rwanda in 2018 and 2019.

He has been behind bars since his arrest in August 2020, when a plane he believed was bound for Burundi landed instead in Kigali.

Neither he nor his lawyers were in court for September’s verdict, which saw his co-defendants receive sentences ranging between three and 20 years.

The United States and Belgium both voiced concern that Rusesabagina had been denied a fair trial.

He denied any involvement in the attacks, but was a founder of the Rwandan Movement for Democratic Change (MRCD), an opposition group of which the FLN is seen as the armed wing.