

A UN court has ruled that ageing Rwandan genocide suspect Felicien Kabuga is unfit to stand trial.

The Hague-based International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals said in an order late Tuesday that it “finds... Mr Felicien Kabuga to be unfit to participate meaningfully in his trial and is very unlikely to regain fitness in the future”.

Instead judges are calling for an ‘alternative’ legal procedure that would not end in a conviction.

The 88-year-old man is accused of being a major financier of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Félicien Kabuga’s lawyers had argued that he suffered from dementia.

He was arrested in Paris in 2020 after evading capture for 26 years, reportedly moving around East Africa.

This is the first time a court has given such a ruling in a decades-long campaign to bring Rwandan genocide suspects to justice.

In their ruling, judges at a UN war crimes court in The Hague said Mr Kabuga was “unfit to participate meaningfully in his trial and is very unlikely to regain fitness in the future”.

The judges proposed an alternative legal procedure that “resembles a trial as closely as possible, but without the possibility of a conviction”.

The court had paused his trial in March to allow for his health to be assessed. According to court documents, he is 88, although there is some dispute about his precise age.

It is alleged that Mr Kabuga used his large fortune, made in the 1970s tea trade, to buy weapons used to arm the Hutu death squads.

The wealthy businessman is also accused of using his radio station to urge Hutus to kill Tutsis, fuelling the genocide by broadcasting inflammatory hate speech.

French investigators tracked him down to an apartment in Paris where he had been living under a false identity.

The United States had offered a reward of \$5m for information leading to his arrest.