

Box 7: Ukubohoza, or forcibly “liberating” the people from the MRND

For managers of administration in the Party-state, the break with the old order, sanctioned by the establishment of the multiparty system, was seen as a double dispossession, which caused deep trauma especially at decentralized levels. The first stemmed from the new legal provisions that put an end to the osmosis between state administration and single party organization. In concrete terms, the MRND was no longer entitled the enjoyment and access to state property, especially remuneration thus resulting¹.

The second, resulting from the *ukubohoza* movement, added an extra-legal dimension to this new deal, often aiming at functions, property and personal resources of the maintained MRND militants.

The *ukubohoza* ("liberation"²) is the name given to the actions of protest and destabilization primarily carried out by the MDR, but also by the PSD and PL against authority officials of the former unique-Party, and more broadly MRND militants at the time of the establishment of the multiparty system. This was meant to "release" them of their attachments and beliefs, to seize the political resources they controlled, or even drive them from their property.

Where opposition parties were strong, mayors, area counselors were thus removed and replaced. This movement was anticipating hypothetical elections and placed in the strategy of holding a Sovereign National Conference (*rukokoma*). In the city of Kigali as well as on the hills of the inner towns, many cases of violence mostly opposed the new MDR *Inkuba* youths to those of the MRND. Thus, in Gitarama and Butare, for example, the MRND ceased its activities in many municipalities, or even practically disappeared. Many of its executives rallied the MDR or PSD. The MRND *Interahamwe* youth invoked a counter-*ukubohoza* about their operations to “free” opponents in the areas where they were a minority, supposedly to allow them to join the MRND.

Édouard Karemera, in charge of the transition between the former and the renovated MRND, thus described the impact of this movement:

“We talked about it, especially as our MDR, PSD, PL opponents had initiated the fatal - I daresay “fatal” – so-called *kubohoza* policy – in Kinyarwanda, that is to say, civil disobedience. And that policy, the *kubohoza*, spread throughout the country. It aimed at the authorities; MDR and its allies in the opposition forcibly recruited. If you were mayor, they asked you: “Either you choose to leave the MRND and join our party, or you should expect to be force to leave this dictatorial party.” [...] And that was not all. The *kubohoza*, this disastrous policy advocated by the Prime Minister himself, Nsengiyaremye Dismas, targeted all development activities that had been made under the one-party regime³. »

These abuses and destruction of public goods qualified as “MRND” (hundreds of hectares of woodland and many buildings burned) were strongly denounced by the foreign donors who, in 1991-1992, firmly condemned the insurrectionary strategy of the emerging opposition. After the establishment of the multi-party government of Dismas Nsengiyaremye (April 1992), his being unable to control political clashes greatly weakened the credibility and support granted to the leaders of the opposition.

¹ Testimony of Édouard KAREMERA, TPIR, 18 May 2009, p. 26-28 (Appendix 18). □

² This Kinyarwanda term is borrowed from Kiswahili, the original *kukomboza* term (“free”) being approximately translated as “*kubohoza*” (see Box 4, the explanation of the *abakombozi* term).

³ Testimony of Édouard KAREMERA, TPIR, 18 May 2009, p. 33.