

Rwandan peacemaker given human rights award

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DURBAN, South Africa (BNG)—The son of Rwandan refugees who became a catalyst for reconciliation among ethnic rivals in his African nation was recognized at the [Baptist World Congress](#) for his vision of “the church as a home of peace.”

Corneille Gato Munyamasoko, general secretary of the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda, received the Baptist World Congress’ Human Rights Award, conferred every five years since 1995.

Ethnic violence

Munyamasoko was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo to Rwandan parents who fled ethnic violence in their home country in the 1950s. In 1994, as many as 1 million Rwandans were killed in tribal violence, primarily by Hutus against Tutsis. In the wake of the genocide, Munyamasoko moved to Rwanda to help rebuild the nation.

He worked to help Rwandans “to understand the causes of the genocide, to seek and to extend forgiveness and to build relationships based on the principles of justice, mercy and faith, emphasizing the need for reconciliation with God, self and others,” BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said in presenting the award.

Peace camp movement

Munyamasoko launched a peace camp movement, bringing together young survivors of the genocide with those whose parents were imprisoned for acts of genocide. He has been a peacemaker, encouraging Rwandans “to

overcome national rivalries and ethnic differences,” Callam said. He led pastors who had condoned acts of genocide to seek forgiveness from the survivors.

Munyamasoko also led his association of Baptist churches to combat stigma associated with HIV and AIDS, training pastors to care for victims infected by the virus.

“This award is recognition of the resilience of all Rwandans,” Munyamasoko said. “The award is a great encouragement to me to continue to strive for the well-being of my brothers and sisters. I feel re-energized in the calling to work for peace.”