

# Massacres in Rwandan capital.

Reuters, April 8, 1994

KIGALI, April 8 (Reuter) - Nuns, priests, aid workers and U.N. peacekeepers fell victim to massacres in Kigali as tribal bloodletting and renewed civil war gripped the Rwandan capital.

Some of the killings were blamed by witnesses and Western officials on Friday on members of the Rwandan army and presidential guard.

Soldiers were apparently retaliating for the killing of President Juvenal Habyarimana, a member of the majority Hutu tribe, in a rocket attack on his plane on Wednesday night.

Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, of the majority Hutu tribe, was killed by government soldiers on Thursday.

Fighting continued on Friday for a second day around the parliament building which had been the base for an estimated 600 rebels of the predominantly Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) who entered Kigali in December under a U.N.-backed peace plan to end four years of civil war.

France said on Friday that several Rwandan government ministers and leading figures, as well as Belgian, Ghanaian and Bangladeshi U.N. peacekeepers, had been killed in the central African country.

“We are dismayed by the assassinations, that of the prime minister, those of ministers and of several leading figures,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Richard Duque told reporters. He did not name the ministers or identify the killers.

Belgium said earlier that 10 of its U.N. peacekeepers assigned to protect the prime minister had been killed by soldiers.

A U.N. spokesman in Kigali said on Thursday that members of the 700-strong presidential guard abducted Information Minister Faustin Rucogoza, Labour and Social Affairs Minister Landuard Ndasingwa and Agriculture Minister Frederic Nzamurambaho. The ministers’ families and three U.N. military observers guarding them were also seized. Their fate was unclear.

In Rome the Jesuit order said 11 nuns and eight priests – all Tutsis – were killed at the order’s Centre of Spirituality in Kigali on Thursday. It did not say who was responsible.

“Three European Jesuits who were at the centre when the massacre took place were spared,” a statement said.

Several dozen Rwandans working for international aid organisations in Kigali had been massacred, the director of the Belgian branch of the charity Medecins sans Frontieres said.

MSF director Georges Dallemagne said in Brussels that armed men, believed to be from the presidential guard, had shot the aid workers dead in front of expatriate staff.

“They went to the houses of MSF Belgium and MSF Holland, UNICEF and Oxfam, called out the local staff and shot them,” he said. Expatriate staff were unharmed.

With the country in a power vacuum, Friday began in Kigali with the scream of mortar bombs and crackle of rifle fire.

One resident spoke of “an orgy of killings out there”.

Fires raged in the city as rebels and soldiers battled around parliament and Tutsis and Hutus fell to slaughtering each other, opening a new chapter in their history of violence that goes back decades.

“They fight, then rest, then resume. It’s calm one moment, then suddenly there are explosions,” the resident said.

“Pogroms and (ethnic) purification are taking place throughout the city,” Carlos Rodriguez, the UNHCR’s representative in Kigali, said in a report released in Geneva.

“There is continuous fighting, there is pillaging and killing... Things have got completely out of hand,” Belgian BRTN radio correspondent Katrien Van der Schoot said from Kigali.

She said the violence was not aimed at Europeans. “It’s clearly aimed at Rwandans, the Tutsis,” she said.

Military sources in Paris said France was considering using troops stationed in the Central African Republic to evacuate its nationals from Rwanda. There are about 600 French nationals in Rwanda, most in the capital.

Belgium, former colonial power in Rwanda, has put a unit of crack paratroops on alert for a possible evacuation of foreigners, government sources said.

A spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also said about 5,000 Rwandans and Burundis had fled their countries for Zaire since the violence began.

U.N. officials feared violence between Rwanda’s Hutu and Tutsi tribes would spread outside the capital.

The U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) appealed to Rwandans to end violence and urged countries that helped broker a peace accord between the rebel RPF and the government last year to act to restore order.

Rebel reinforcements were reported to be moving on the capital.

President Habyarimana, who took power in 1973, and Cyprien Ntaryamira, president of neighbouring Burundi, died when a plane bringing them back from regional peace talks in Tanzania was hit by a rocket on Wednesday night.

Who killed them was not clear. The RPF denied involvement.

Residents said many killings were being carried out by members of the army who were searching house-to-house for Tutsi RPF sympathisers and their Hutu political allies.

Youths wielding machetes, knives and clubs stalked Kigali, settling tribal scores by hacking and clubbing people to death or simply shooting them, witnesses said.

The U.N. Security Council in New York denounced the violence. It took no fresh decision on whether to leave U.N. troops in place. It asked Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to gather information as soon as possible.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994