

OAU condemns Rwanda bloodbath, Zaire mourns.

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ADDIS ABABA, April 8 (Reuter) - The Organisation of African Unity's secretary-general on Friday denounced the bloodletting in Rwanda and called for peace in the central African country.

Other African leaders echoed the call for peace and neighbouring Zaire declared eight days of mourning.

"I condemn in the strongest terms these heinous acts perpetrated by some elements of the security forces," said Salim Ahmed Salim, secretary-general of the Addis Ababa-based OAU.

"I call upon all those involved to halt to this carnage, to respect the sanctity of human life, work towards the restoration of peace and social order," Salim said in a statement.

Rwandan presidential guards have fought fierce battles with the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) while other military regiments and civilians have rampaged through the capital Kigali in chaotic scenes since their president was killed on Wednesday.

Rwanda's prime minister is among the dead.

Salim urged parties to a Rwandan peace agreement in Tanzania last August to revive the pact. "That agreement remains as valid as before and constitutes the basis for peace, national reconciliation and unity in the country," he said.

Zaire declared eight days of mourning to mark the deaths of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, killed in a rocket attack on their plane at Kigali airport.

The mourning period for Rwanda's Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi's Cyprien Ntaryamira was announced on state television. An announcer read a message of condolence from President Mobutu Sese Seko sent to Rwanda's prime minister and parliamentary speaker, saying it had been sent before both officials were themselves killed.

Mobutu, current chairman of the sub-regional Economic Community of the Countries of the Great Lakes (CEPGL), met both presidents at his northern palace at Gbadolite on Monday, before they left for regional peace talks in Tanzania.

They were landing on their return from Dar Es Salaam on Wednesday night when a rocket destroyed their aircraft.

West African leaders sent condolences on Friday.

Benin's President Nicephore Soglo, chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) told his country's television that the double killing pained the whole continent.

Niger's government issued a statement calling on the people of Rwanda and Burundi to take their grievances to the OAU and stop the bloodshed.

Politicians and academics meeting in the Ugandan capital Kampala under the umbrella body Pan African Congress (PAC) also condemned the anarchy in Kigali and asked the OAU to intervene.

"We condemn very strongly the presidential guard and all those who are involved in the killing taking place... and call upon the OAU as well as other neighbouring African states to take steps to bring about the cessation of hostilities and restore a condition of peace and democracy among the peoples of all factions in that country," they said in a statement.

The PAC groups leading African politicians and black civil rights activists from America and the West Indies.

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