

Rwandan bishops deplore violence in Kigali

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VATICAN CITY, April 11 (Reuter) - Rwanda's Roman Catholic bishops on Monday deplored the violence in their central African country and demanded an end to the bloody conflict.

In a scathing letter from the conference of Rwandan bishops, the clergymen said they were horrified by the mass murders of priests and children following the killing of Rwanda's president on Wednesday.

"Dead bodies litter the streets, others rot in homes or hospital corridors. We recount with pain that among them are many priests and members of religious orders," they said in the letter which was published in the Vatican's daily bulletin.

"We take this occasion to condemn with vigour the authors of the violence...who spill the blood of fellow Rwandans with no respect for leaders or pity for little children," they added.

Rwanda is lurching towards full-scale civil war after tribal fighting erupted following the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana and his counterpart from neighbouring Burundi.

The bishops demanded an end to the fighting.

"The Catholic bishops of Rwanda want to see genuine and efficient dialogue and negotiations. That is why we are asking the government and the armed forces of Rwanda to stop the war and resolve their conflicts."

Rwandan bishops did not take part in the opening of an important synod of African bishops at the Vatican on Sunday because of the conflict.

A spokesman for the delegation said the five bishops would join the synod, which lasts until May 8, only if the situation in Rwanda improved.

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