

Belgium to pull peacekeepers out of Rwanda

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BRUSSELS, April 14 (Reuter) - Belgian foreign minister Willy Claes said on Thursday that Belgium had decided to withdraw its contingent of United Nations peacekeepers from war-torn Rwanda.

"The Belgian blue helmets will stay under no circumstances," Claes told a news conference. "No matter what the decision of the (U.N.) Security Council may be, they will not continue to take part in the (U.N. operation)."

Claes said the peacekeeping mission of the U.N. no longer had a purpose because it was originally meant to implement a peace agreement signed last year.

He said the presence of the Blue Helmets had been unable to prevent the deaths of tens of thousands of people and there was such an anti-Belgian climate in the country that Belgium could no longer take the responsibility of endangering its soldiers further.

"We do not believe that the presence of the Blue Helmets in the current situation makes any sense," he said.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali said on Wednesday he was notified of Belgium's intention to pull its contingent out of Rwanda when he met Claes in Bonn on Tuesday.

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