

Hutus kill 1,180 Tutsis in Rwandan church - paper

Reuters, April 15, 1994

MADRID, April 15 (Reuter) - Extremist Hutus armed with machetes and guns murdered some 1,180 Tutsis at a church in Rwanda this week, the Spanish daily El Pais reported on Friday.

El Pais special correspondent Alfonso Armada, whose graphic account was accompanied by photographs of the bodies, reported from the scene that the massacre occurred on Wednesday in Gikoro, 40 km east of the Rwandan capital Kigali.

Quoting a Slovenian priest, Father August Horvat, Armada reported that the minority Tutsis had been hacked to pieces by members of the majority Hutu tribe, who bore machetes, clubs, spears, grenades and guns.

"It has been the Hutus. All the dead are Tutsis," Armada quoted Horvat as saying.

The El Pais correspondent quoted a Croatian priest, Danko Litric, as giving the death toll of 1,180. Horvat, however, said the mutilated bodies were "impossible to count".

Thousands have died in Rwanda in an orgy of bloodletting sparked by the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana in a rocket attack on his plane last week.

"Yesterday, in the middle of the jumble of cadavers, amputated body parts and shoes lost in an archipelego of blood, one arm moved, sweetly asking for help. No one, myself included, offered it," Armada wrote.

He, Horvat and Litric tried to get help from Italian troops stationed nearby, but the Italians said they had a specific assignment to rescue three priests.

"We can do nothing. It's not our affair," the Italian commander said, according to El Pais.

"When the Italians returned to Gikoro after rescuing a Belgian priest from the village Umudugudu, the arm was finally still, like the pole of an invisible flag," Armada wrote.

Armada, who photographed the bodies of those massacred, said he came across Horvat and Litric hiding in the parish house. The two priests had worked in the village for six years.

The fighting in Rwanda has caused an exodus of refugees and three Spanish nuns who had been trapped in a hospital in Kibuye with a group of around 20

terrified Tutsis arrived in Madrid on Friday.

The three nuns had agreed to be evacuated on condition that a Rwandan colleague was also saved.

One of the nuns, Sister Pilar Espelosin, had been in regular contact with Spanish radio stations and had often said she feared for their lives as Hutus armed with machetes and spears gathered outside.

“We were very afraid but we managed to save everyone including four children who were with us,” she told journalists on her arrival with other evacuees in Madrid.

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