

# Kigali gunmen killing wounded – witnesses

Esipisu, Manoah

Reuters, April 18, 1994

NAIROBI, April 18 (Reuter) - Gunmen in the Rwandan capital of Kigali appeared on Monday to have started deliberately killing wounded people in areas they controlled, witnesses said.

They said grinning gunmen at several checkpoints stopped Red Cross vehicles, shuttling wounded between hospitals in the carnage-torn capital, and told staff they had no wounded to be picked up.

“It appears they are deliberately killing all casualties so none are evacuated because they know that the Red Cross would take any casualties to hospital,” said a diplomat who was based in Kigali.

“It is another terrible step in this absolute nightmare.”

The gunmen previously dumped dead and wounded on nearby roadsides or in ditches. Frequently, unless Red Cross teams arrived first and were able to check for signs of life, the badly wounded were assumed to be dead and dumped in trucks with the corpses by clean-up crews of convicts who took them to mass graves outside the city.

Witnesses reached by telephone said Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels and government forces fought sporadically across the city on Monday for a 12th day but battles had eased since Sunday.

With supplies extremely short in Kigali, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) distributed food on Monday to 5,000 Zaireans trapped at the Zairean embassy near an army base.

“But there an awful lot more people going hungry across this city and we just cannot reach them,” said an ICRC delegate.

Aid workers said thousands of people were still streaming into southern Rwanda in an exodus which began when tribal mayhem spread through Kigali after the killing of Rwanda’s president on April 6.

Concern was growing over the fate of an estimated 4,000 people – including wounded – who took refuge in Kigali’s main sports stadium without food or shelter last week near the worst battle zones.

Officials said RPF rebels for the first time used heavy calibre Soviet-made “Stalin Organ” multiple rocket launchers to bombard government-held parts of northeastern Kigali on Sunday.

They said the rocket fire from the Tutsi-dominated RPF appeared concentrated on a private radio station operated by extremists of Rwanda’s Hutu majority

who rose up in revenge when the president was killed in a rocket attack on his plane.

The RPF also was reported to have seized the town of Murambi southeast of Kigali on Sunday after rocket attacks, they said.

General Romeo Dallaire, commander of the U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda, was said by diplomats to be concentrating on trying again to arrange talks between the RPF and interim government to end the carnage.

The U.N. Security Council has not yet decided on the future of the 2,500-member U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), set up last year to help implement a peace pact to end three years of civil war.

Face-to-face talks on Friday failed over tough conditions each party set ahead of real peace negotiations.

Government conditions for a ceasefire included an immediate halt to fighting, setting up of patrols solely manned by state police, ending what it called "punitive expeditions" by rebels and "neutralisation of stray soldiers committing abuses".

The RPF said it wanted the presidential guard, which is blamed for much of the anarchy in Kigali and the countryside, to be disbanded and joint rebel-government patrols launched.

The rebels also wanted the interim government dissolved so it could open talks with opposition groups on setting up an all-party transitional administration of national unity.

The first Belgian paratroops started arriving home in Belgium on Monday after evacuating Westerners from Rwanda. A later flight was expected to bring out officers attached to the U.N. mission.

A military spokesman said Belgium's full contingent of about 420 U.N. troops in Rwanda would start to withdraw fully from Tuesday, probably by road via Tanzania because it appeared the safest route.

Belgium announced its withdrawal from the UNAMIR after 10 of its paratroops were killed while trying in vain to protect the prime minister, a Tutsi, who was killed after fleeing to a U.N. compound.

U.N. peacekeepers from Belgium, the former colonial power in Rwanda, have been holding the airport in Rwanda's capital Kigali and will be replaced there by about 800 Ghanaian soldiers.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994