

Rwandan rights activist calls on U.N. to stay

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MONTREAL, April 18 (Reuter) - A Rwandan human rights leader, who escaped her country after hiding in the rafters of her home, pleaded Monday for continued United Nations presence to keep Rwanda from becoming a nation of killers.

Monique Mujawamariya, 38, whose face is scarred from a 1992 assassination attempt, said she hoped the United Nations will keep Rwanda a top priority.

For nearly two weeks, thousands of people in Rwanda have been killed in an orgy of ethnic violence involving the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi tribes.

Forces of the Hutu-dominated government and rebels of the Rwanda Patriotic Front are battling for control of the capital, Kigali.

"If they slaughter everyone we will not have a chance to see our country (as it was) again," Mujawamariya told journalists when she arrived in Montreal.

"Because nothing will remain but the killers."

Mujawamariya, a leader of the Rwandan Human Rights and Public Liberties Association, had received many death threats even before the country plunged into violence following the death of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana in a rocket attack on his plane April 6.

But she said she would continue to fight for peace in Rwanda from Montreal, and hoped to inform people about the atrocities.

Mujawamariya said gunmen stormed her neighbourhood after Habyarimana was killed, dragging people out of their homes and executing them. She said she hid in the rafters of her home for three days before escaping, leaving behind her three children.

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