

ICRC says hundreds of thousands Rwandans may be dead

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GENEVA, April 21 (Reuter) - The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Thursday it had rarely seen a human tragedy on the scale of massacres in Rwanda where deaths could run into hundreds of thousands.

"Tens, maybe hundreds of thousands killed : the exact number of victims of the massacres that have swept Rwanda over the last two weeks will never be known," the ICRC said in a statement.

"The human tragedy in Rwanda is on a scale that the International Committee of the Red Cross has rarely witnessed."

The humanitarian agency said its 30 delegates in Rwanda, a French medical team from the charity Medecins Sans Frontieres and Rwandean Red Cross volunteers had been risking their lives since April 6 to "preserve a measure of humanity".

"What they have done is vital, but is no more than drop in the ocean," said the statement.

The ICRC also said several hundred thousand people fleeing the ethnic fighting were massed in the south and north of Rwanda.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on Wednesday that the number of people crossing Rwandas's borders to escape the violence had doubled over the past week - more than 50,000 refugees were now registered in four neighbouring countries.

The UNHCR also expressed fears for 6,000 people it said were being held in a stadium in the southern Rwandan town of Cyangugu by police and militiamen.

It quoted field reports saying police had pulled 60 people out of the stadium and that 16 had been executed.

A UNHCR spokesman in Geneva told Reuters on Thursday : "We are still concerned about their situation. They are apparently not getting any food and are living in appalling conditions.

"There is food in the city, but they are unable to distribute it to the people in the stadium because of fighting in the streets."

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