

# Violence lurks round every corner - it is random and inescapable

## Scott Peterson in Kigali, Rwanda, joins evacuees on their journey through a widespread carnage that the world is powerless to prevent

A CROWD of Rwandans lining the muddy road were silent, stopping momentarily from their bloody work like children caught stealing from a biscuit tin, as we passed with a French military convoy.

Armed with cudgels and machetes and long knives, their handiwork was nearby — three corpses, bleeding in the dirt.

An hour later, when we returned with a group of Belgian evacuees, the number of those killed by the silent crowd had risen to 11.

One Belgian woman peered over the edge of the lorry and grimaced with fear: "Oh God," she gasped. "Is it like that everywhere?"

Despite the arrival of hundreds of Belgian and French troops to evacuate foreigners — and more than 2,000 United Nations "peacekeepers" already in Rwanda — the savage killing continues in the capital.

The brutality among the lush green hills is inescapable. No one is safe and violence is random, lurking around corners along muddy trails and behind thick undergrowth.

A short ceasefire came into effect late on Sunday night so that expatriates could be evacuated, but it is

no one's mandate to end the tribal bloodshed that has already cost tens of thousands of lives in Kigali.

Two mass graves are being dug. Witnesses say that rooms at the hospital are stuffed full with hundreds of bodies.

The ceasefire ended towards dusk when government mortars blasted positions of the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front in the north of the city.

UN forces are in Rwanda to monitor peace accords signed between rebels and the government last August.

But they and other forces can do nothing to stop the slaughter which erupted when President Juvnal Habyarimana was assassinated last week.

"We can't do anything for the civilians. We must stay neutral," said Belgian UN 1st Lieut Oliver Carlens. "I've seen women and children massacred there, in front of our compound, but we cannot intervene."

Members of the International Committee of the Red Cross move each morning around the city to collect the wounded, but theirs is the only emblem respected by those who control the streets.

Belgian forces who arrived on Sunday night dug into position around the airport yesterday. They and the French are expected to depart when all foreigners have been evacuated.

More than 300 non-essential UN staff were evacuated yesterday, including most of the UN military police contingent.

French military escorts have been collecting traumatised expatriates at the French school, where each relates horrible tales of killing and looting. Marie Helene Adot, a Spanish nun from the Life and Peace Order, said that seven Presidential Guard soldiers — whose units are blamed for beginning the carnage — came to her mission on Thursday near Kigali stadium and separated Rwandans from the foreigners and herded them into a room.

One of the black berets then said: "There are people who wanted to see a bloodbath in this country. Now we are going to do it."

The soldiers tossed a grenade into the room, killing 17 sisters, Jesuit priests and monks. The victims were from both Hutu and Tutsi tribes.

Fighting began between three factions in the military, vying to take control in the anarchy, and then spread to include attacks on a 600-strong rebel garrison, stationed in the capital as part of the earlier peace accords.

Confirmation that President Habyarimana's plane was shot down by his own airborne units — and not the mainly Tutsi rebels — came yesterday from Belgian UN officers who witnessed the attack on the plane.

Two rockets were fired at the presidential jet from the main airborne base at Kanombe, bringing it down three miles of the airport.

No one knew when the plane was landing or that it carried the President — except Rwanda's most elite units.

Government radio had linked Belgian UN troops to the plane crash, stirring up bad blood towards the Belgians — the former colonial rulers of Rwanda. A guard unit disarmed a 10-man Belgian UN military escort of the Prime Minister, and executed each one of them.

They were found, Belgian evacuees say, badly mutilated.

However, the Belgian and other forces have held their fire, and allowed the violence between Rwandans to rage on.

They will leave when the expatriates are gone, and with relief agencies pulling out, there will be few independent eyes to witness — and describe — the daily carnage.

With the rebels set to advance at any moment to assist their embattled garrison in the city, there seems little immediate hope of peace.

A Red Cross worker among the evacuees predicted: "The worst is yet to come."