

Tribal clashes claim 60 lives : official

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NAIROBI, March 11 (AFP) - Tribal clashes have claimed 60 lives in Rwanda since they broke out last week between the majority Hutus and the Tutsi people, Interior Minister Faustin Munyazesa said Wednesday.

The minister gave the new toll during a meeting between President Juvenal Habyarimana and western diplomats in Kigali, a diplomatic source reached from Nairobi said.

One of the dead was an Italian nun, Antonia Locatelli, who was shot dead late Monday in Nyamata in the southeastern Bugesera region as she tried to protect children in a school she ran, Radio Rwanda reported.

On Monday night, Munyazesa raised the official death toll from 20 to 35, but added that the situation had become "better" since troops were deployed to back gendarmerie units in each town and village.

The relatively inaccessible Gashora and Ngenda districts of the small highland nation contained "pockets of resistance", he said.

A Bugesera resident and member of the largest opposition party, the Democratic Republican Movement (MDR), told AFP on Monday that fighting among Hutus and the minority Tutsis had claimed 150 lives since Wednesday.

Prime Minister Sylvestre Nsanzimana has appealed for calm and pledged that "Bugesera trouble-makers" found guilty of murder would be punished "without mercy".

The violence, in which 6,000 Tutsis have fled their homes, was sparked when the radio last week broadcast a tract from an unknown group warning that 20 leading Hutus in both the government and the opposition were to be assassinated.

Tension between the Tutsi and the Hutu has mounted in Bugesera and Kanzenze, south of the capital Kigali, since the opposition Liberal Party held a rally on March 1.

Rwandan officials suspect the party of being the internal wing of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR), a rebel movement of mainly Tutsi former exiles who invaded the country from Uganda in October 1990.

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