

Troops evacuating Tutsis

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GOSHIYTA, Rwanda, June 30 (AFP) – French troops evacuated about 100 wounded Tutsis to Zaire Thursday from an area where they were under threat from hundreds of Hutus.

About half the Tutsis taken to the Zairean border town of Goma were children, and all had bullet, grenade or machete wounds that will force them to have limbs amputated, military surgeon Francois Pons said.

They were from a group of about 400 Tutsis, Rwanda's minority tribe, threatened by hundreds of majority Hutus in the hills around this western town. French marines took them under their protection.

A French patrol found the Tutsis camped just 300 meters (yards) from several hundred Hutus positioned on a ridge above them and believed to be armed.

"If we leave, they'll be massacred," a French soldier told journalists.

"We'll stay as long as necessary," an officer said.

A deputy to Pons, Sylvain Rigal, said the wounded children were "happy and smiling despite their physical condition and clearly relieved for this nightmare to be over."

French military officials in Goma said the evacuation might continue Friday.

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