

U.N. reports accord on Rwanda cease-fire, government

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UNITED NATIONS, April 8 (Reuter) - The president of the Security Council reported a marked improvement in the situation in civil-war torn Rwanda late Friday, with agreement among various factions on a ceasefire and the appointment of an interim government.

“Agreement has been reached on a ceasefire and as of half-an-hour ago I was informed that there was significant improvement in the security situation by comparison with 24 hours ago,” ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand said.

Speaking to reporters after closed-door council consultations, he said : “On the political front, there has been agreement on, and promulgation of, a decision ... of the appointment of an interim government and an acting or interim president and prime minister, and five ministers have been named.”

He said the 2,500-member U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and other U.N. personnel had played a role in efforts to halt the fighting and stabilise the situation.

The U.N. force was sent to Rwanda last year to help implement an accord signed in August between the government and rebels of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), ending a three-year civil war.

The latest violence erupted after Rwanda’s President Juvenal Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of neighbouring Burundi were killed Wednesday night when a rocket destroyed their plane as they were landing in Kigali after attending a meeting in Tanzania.

Hundreds of people have been reported killed since then, including political leaders, aid workers, nuns, priests, ordinary Rwandans and 10 Belgian U.N. peacekeepers.

Keating said consultations leading up to the announcement of a ceasefire and interim government involved the Rwandan gendarmerie and army, and the RPF, composed mainly of Tutsis who fought the country’s Hutu government during the civil war.

He was unable immediately to give the names of the newly- -appointed ministers but described them as “political leaders from essentially opposition parties.”

“The security situation generally in the country outside Kigali, we are advised, is relatively calm and has been throughout the day,” he said.

In the capital itself, the “security situation has continued to improve.” Although probably still far from good, this had to be measured against the “disastrous” situation Thursday.

Keating also the Red Cross had told him its personnel had access to many parts of Kigali, enabling them to evacuate wounded people to hospital.

The Security Council, which remained greatly concerned, would continue to monitor the situation closely over the weekend and would meet if necessary to deal with whatever reports were received.

Keating said he had an assurance from the RPF that its troops near the Ugandan border would not advance on the capital.

The RPF also controls approaches to the Kigali airport, which is still held by the hardline Hutu presidential guard, blamed for much of the violence.

Although there was no immediate move to augment the U.N. force in Rwanda, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent a letter to the Security Council saying UNAMIR would require another two to three battalions – between 1,500 and 2,000 additional troops – if it became necessary to use it to evacuate U.N. civilian staff and other foreigners.

Boutros-Ghali, now in Geneva, also noted UNAMIR’s mandate might have to be changed, since at present it may use force only in self-defence.

Diplomats said Belgium, which has more than 400 soldiers already serving with the U.N. contingent in Rwanda, wanted to send in additional troops under a U.N. flag to rescue its 1,500 nationals there.

France and the United States, which has some 255 citizens in Rwanda, were also reported to be making evacuation plans.

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