

## Former Rwandan ministers seek asylum in Zaire

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KINSHASA, April 14 (Reuter) - Zaire has offered asylum to a group of former Rwandan government ministers who have fled to neighbouring Burundi with their families, a government official said on Thursday.

The official said the group of former ministers, who include members of Rwanda's short-lived interim government, had flown to Burundi's capital of Bujumbura earlier this week.

"Given a certain amount of local hostility in Bujumbura, we have agreed for humanitarian reasons to a request from the Red Cross and UNHCR to grant these people residence permits," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

He could not say which ministers were in the group or how many people were involved, saying the Zairean government was still awaiting details. But he thought the group numbered around 100.

They are due to fly out of Bujumbura today on a Transal plane bound for the eastern Zairean town of Bukavu, on the border with Rwanda and Burundi.

The entire Rwandan cabinet fled Kigali on Tuesday as rebel troops advanced on the battered capital after days of tribal slaughter which followed the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana in a plane crash. The Burundi president was also killed in the same crash.

Rwanda's former health minister, Casimir Bizimungu, has already flown to Kinshasa. But the minister, a close friend of the former Rwandan president, is understood to be carrying official messages from Kigali rather than seeking asylum.

The flood of terrified Rwandan refugees into eastern Zaire continued on Thursday. A UNHCR spokeswoman in Kinshasa said more than 9,300 Rwandans had crossed the border over the last few days, many travelling as far as the central city of Kisangani.

She said many of the refugees were lodging with friends and relatives, while others were living in hostels or make-shift camps.

UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC and local non-governmental organisations and religious groups are meeting the new arrivals and arranging for blankets, tents, baby food and soap to be flown into the area.

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