

# U.N. says Rwanda cease-fire talks agreed

Reuters, April 14, 1994

Anthony Goodman

UNITED NATIONS, April 13 (Reuter) - The Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and the country's recently installed interim government have agreed to meet Thursday under U.N. auspices to discuss a ceasefire in the civil war-torn nation, the Security Council president said late Wednesday.

Council President Colin Keating of New Zealand said the meeting would take place at the headquarters in the capital Kigali of the 2,500-man U.N. force sent to Rwanda last year to help implement an accord which temporarily ended the three-year civil war.

"That is the first optimistic sign we have seen perhaps since the beginning of this crisis, and the Security Council wants to welcome it very much and encourage that process," Keating told reporters.

He said the council attached great importance to the RPF living up to its statements of peaceful intent and that it wished to establish a broad-based government and stop the killing.

"The council's response to that is we will judge you by your actions, not your words, and we want you to act right now to stop the killing. And that means a ceasefire, and we want it soon."

The latest carnage, in which thousands have been slaughtered, erupted a week ago after Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, together with President Cyprien Ntaryamira of neighbouring Burundi, were killed when their plane was shot down as it was landing at Kigali after a flight from Tanzania.

An interim government was announced Friday, with a former head of Parliament, Theodore Sindikubwabo, named interim president.

The government was reported to have fled Kigali earlier this week as RPF forces advanced on the capital.

But Keating said there was communication between the government and the headquarters of the U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

"We are advised that representatives will be available for discussion. I imagine those would be representatives of the military forces who are engaged in the actual fighting," he added.

The Security Council, meanwhile, was trying to find a new role for the U.N. force, whose original mandate has become outdated.

The principal concern of the majority of countries providing troops for UNAMIR was "that the United Nations not abandon Rwanda," he said.

The largest contingents are from Bangladesh, which has about 940 troops in the U.N. force; Ghana with some 840; and Belgium, Rwanda's former colonial ruler, which has approximately 440 soldiers serving with UNAMIR.

Ten Belgian U.N. soldiers were killed during the recent bloodletting, and Brussels has announced its intention to withdraw its contingent.

Keating said that "at a very minimum, we will be looking at a resolution which changes the mandate of the U.N. operation."

Council members believed that U.N. withdrawal from Rwanda was not an option, but neither was a peace-enforcement mission involving the use of force, like the one in Somalia.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in a letter to the council that in view of the impending pullout of the well-equipped Belgian contingent, which plays a pivotal role, he had called for plans to be drawn up for the possible withdrawal of UNAMIR.

Keating said all council members were sympathetic to Belgium's concerns, since its U.N. troops were "under particular threat" and were hampered by the need to ensure to their own protection.

While UNAMIR as such might not continue, the council would have to work out "a new mission with a new mandate," capable of operating without the Belgian contingent.

Non-aligned council members have drafted a proposed resolution calling for UNAMIR to be strengthened and for a revision of its mandate to enable it to contribute to the restoration of law and order.

The North American representative of the RPF, Claude Dusaidi, sent a letter to the council president calling for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal to try those guilty of crimes against humanity in Rwanda.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994