

Over 50,000 flee Rwanda violence

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GENEVA, April 20 (Reuter) - The number of people fleeing ethnic violence in Rwanda has doubled over the past week and now stands at over 50,000 in four neighbouring countries, the U.N. refugee agency said on Wednesday.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said 37,000 people had arrived in Burundi, most of them Burundians who fled their own ethnic conflict last year.

Some 10,000 Rwandan refugees have gone into Zaire, 4,000 to Uganda and up to 7,000 to Tanzania.

In a statement from its Geneva headquarters, the UNHCR expressed concern for 6,000 people being held in a stadium in the southern Rwandan town of Cyangugu by Rwandan police and militiamen.

“Field reports received by UNHCR said 60 people had been pulled out from the stadium by police and that 16 of them were subsequently executed,” the UNHCR said.

“Reports from local authorities, missionaries and relief workers in Cyangugu said 10,850 people have been killed in the district since violence erupted in Rwanda two weeks ago, indicating that clashes have spread from the capital Kigali to the countryside.”

The agency said it had launched an airlift of urgently needed supplies to the central African region. Before fighting erupted in Rwanda on April 6, the UNHCR had been looking after 275,000 Burundi refugees there.

An 11-strong emergency team arrived in Goma, eastern Zaire, on Monday and two cargo planes had delivered jerrycans, plastic sheeting, generators, and other relief supplies.

Two other airlifts were being arranged for Burundi, six trucks loaded with fuel were awaiting permission to cross from Burundi to Rwanda, and the World Food Programme (WFP) was rushing maize, beans, vegetable oil and salt to Tanzania.

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