

# Truce talks Rwanda's last chance, say officials

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ARUSHA, Tanzania, April 23 (Reuter) - Talks between Rwanda's warring parties on Saturday were the African nation's "last chance" if they wanted international help, United Nations officials said.

"It's the last chance for the Rwandan people," U.N. special envoy Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh told Reuters in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha.

Last-ditch talks were scheduled to start later in the day, attended by top officials and diplomats from the region including Organisation of African Unity Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, to reach a ceasefire.

Neither the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) nor their government rivals had turned up yet for the talks, which the presidents of Tanzania and Uganda had pressured the two warring parties to attend, diplomats said.

Human rights groups estimate 100,000 people may have been butchered and two million displaced by fighting in the aftermath of president Juvenal Habyarimana's death in a plane crash caused by a rocket attack on April 6.

On Thursday the Security Council cut the U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) force from 2,500 to 270, deployed to help implement a peace accord reached in Arusha last August, due to the resumption of fighting this month.

The move was criticised by relief agencies and the OAU as abandoning the nation, but the Security Council said it would promptly consider the force level and mandate of the U.N. operation depending on developments.

"I have been authorised by the Secretary-General to keep 1,000 troops in Nairobi, so if we can get a ceasefire these can be brought back to Kigali to implement the agreement," Booh-Booh told Reuters.

Most of the peacekeepers being held back in the Kenyan capital Nairobi after being evacuated from Rwanda this week were from Ghana and would wait for only "two or three days", Booh-Booh said.

As it stands, the Security Council resolution allows for a company of 150 armed peacekeepers to protect U.N. officials trying to broker talks in the Rwandan capital.

The extra U.N. troops might be used to escort relief convoys to help countless thousands in need and also to protect those who have sought U.N. protection from death squads of the majority Hutu tribe on a killing spree of Tutsis and opposition supporters, diplomats said.

Diplomats admitted prospects for reaching a ceasefire were bleak.

The RPF, which moved out of its stronghold in the country's northern hills to advance on the capital and stop its supporters being killed, has refused to recognise an interim government announced by Habyarimana's followers after his death.

"The problem is the RPF doesn't want to discuss with the government. They only want to talk with the military," said one Western ambassador.

"The talks might not even take place, but we are still waiting," he added.

RPF leaders have repeatedly said they want the dissolution of the interim government, the arrest and disarmament of Habyarimana's Presidential Guard and the Hutu militias, and an end to the massacres before it will consider a truce.

Aid workers said the killings were going on unabated, particularly in the south where the RPF has yet to advance, but Booh-Booh said the fighting in Kigali was : "Not so intensive...It has somehow stabilised".

Thousands of rebel reinforcements are converging on Kigali, much of which is now under RPF control.

The RPF, which invaded from Uganda in October 1990, says it wants to set up a broad-based transitional government after law and order is reestablished and has also invited regular government army units to join up with it.

Guerrilla leaders say they still respect the tenets of the Arusha accord of nine months ago, which it says was never implemented because of obstruction from Habyarimana.

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