

30 years of massacres provides background to Rwandan unrest

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PARIS, April 9 (AFP) - Rwanda, where violence has reportedly left thousands dead since Wednesday when an aircraft carrying the presidents of Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi crashed, killing them both, has been the flashpoint of massacres between Hutu and Tutsi tribes for 30 years.

And neighbouring Burundi, where the situation has so far remained calm, has also known bloody clashes between the two tribes which have left hundreds of thousand dead.

Rwanda, a small mountainous state in eastern Africa, has a population of about five million, 90 percent of which is Hutu and nine percent Tutsi.

- In November 1959, historic rivalry between the majority Hutus and their Tutsi overlords flares. Hutu farmers massacre several thousand Tutsi landlords.

- In late 1963, 18 months after

independence from Belgium, Tutsis from Burundi launch a series of raids against the Kigali regime, now dominated by Hutus. Repression leaves some 10,000 to 20,000 Tutsis dead, while more than 100,000 flee to Burundi.

- December 1972 to February 1973, Hutu students attack Tutsis in schools and colleges where they are said to be too numerous. Some 300 Tutsis are killed.

- October 1990, 1,500 Tutsi rebels from the Patriotic Rwandan Front (PRF) cross over from Burundi, attacking forces of President Juvenal Habyarimana and sparking a civil war. Refugees accuse the army of massacring several thousand Tutsi civilians in the north of the country. Kigali denies the allegations.

- Early 1991, more than 1,200 Bagogwe, a tribe related to the Tutsis, are killed in the northwest of the country during army operations

against rebels, the PRF says. A report, put together by two Belgian lawyers, puts the death toll at 1,000 to 1,500.

- March 1992, Hutus kill some 300 people, mainly Tutsis in the southern Bugesera region.

- Early 1993, Hutus kill some 300 mainly Tutsi civilians in the north of the country. Tutsi rebels launch new attacks on government troops, sparking a new wave of emigration.

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