

Austria wants help to evacuate nationals from Rwanda

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VIENNA, April 9 (AFP) - Austria has asked France, Belgium and Germany to evacuate if necessary 15 Austrians living in the strife-torn Rwandan capital, Kigali, the foreign ministry said Saturday.

The Austrian civilians would be flown out of the country, where savage ethnic fighting has left at least 1,000 dead in the last three days, along with citizens of the three other countries, under the protection of French and Belgian troops.

Austria also has some 40 nationals serving with United Nations peace-keeping troops deployed in Rwanda as part of a transition scheme ahead of elections planned for next year.

Two aircraft carrying Belgian paratroopers bound for Kigali left

from Brussels Saturday. There are 1,500 Belgian nationals in the country.

French troops took control of Kigali airport earlier Saturday in preparation for the possible evacuation of 3,000 foreign nationals from the turbulent east African country.

But hopes for a speedy evacuation faded late Saturday afternoon as a Belgian defence ministry spokesman in Brussels reported that Rwandan troops had blocked the airport runway late Saturday afternoon.

A detachment of US marines has already reached the Burundi capital of Bujumbura, about 500 kilometres (300 miles) from Kigali.

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