

Confusion reigns as Burundi government declares coup a failure

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BUJUMBURA, Oct 29 (AFP) - Amid reports of unabating carnage, Burundi's government on Thursday declared that last week's military coup had failed, even though soldiers supposedly confined to barracks still patrolled the streets of the capital.

Premier Sylvie Kinigi's government claimed it was in control, but its members were still in hiding in foreign embassies. President Melchior Ndadaye and several ministers were killed in the coup on October 21.

And despite relative calm in the capital, where the airport reopened Thursday morning after a curfew was lifted, the provinces were in turmoil.

There were reports of continuing massacres by the Hutu ethnic majority and the Tutsi group, which dominates the army.

Ndadaye was the first Hutu to head the government since independence from Belgium in 1962.

Representatives of the Interna-

tional Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who flew over the north of the country had spotted large numbers of corpses, the ICRC said in Geneva.

The delegates said many were dying of their injuries on the way to hospital in Bujumbura, estimating that more than 100,000 civilians were fleeing the north, north-east and east of the country to seek refuge in neighbouring Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and Zaire to the west.

U.N. special envoy James Jonah has meanwhile stepped up contacts with all factions since Wednesday in a bid to break the deadlock.

Jonah said after talks with the army chief of general staff, Colonel Jean Bikomagu, that the military "recognised the legal government, which is assuming power and its responsibilities" after the coup bid.

"The commander of the armed forces has assured me that the army will remain in barracks and recog-

nises the legitimacy of the government elected in June," Jonah said.

He said he would ask U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to send "a protection force for

legitimate institutions and their representatives," adding that he was sure of a "positive response."

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