

Ethnic warfare rages as western evacuation stepped up

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KIGALI, April 11 (AFP) - Ethnic warfare continued to rage in Rwanda as Belgium prepared to send another 400 paratroopers Monday to its strife-torn former colony, and western nations stepped up the evacuation of foreigners.

The fresh troops were due to fly in from the Kenyan capital Nairobi to bolster a force of 250 which flew into Kigali on Sunday to help protect western civilians trapped by the bloody communal conflict.

Mortar explosions and automatic gunfire resounded Sunday night in Kigali where French forces are currently spearheading a major evacuation operation.

A French paratrooper - one of 280 who flew into the capital Friday - said there had been "more shooting" in the town Sunday than in previous days.

However, some residents said the situation had calmed down somewhat

after more than 1,000 people died in an orgy of violence sparked by last Wednesday's death in a plane crash of Rwanda's long-time president Juvenal Habyarimana.

The president, a member of the Hutu ethnic majority was killed along with the president of neighbouring Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira, also a Hutu.

Rwandan officials said the plane was shot down, sparking widespread slaughter mostly of the Tutsi minority.

French paratrooper Captain Millet attributed the heavy artillery fire to fighting between Hutu-led government forces and rebels of the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front.

He said it was believed the government forces were trying to capture a base given to the RPF in Kigali under a UN-brokered peace accord on power-sharing signed last August.

The whereabouts of some 4,000

RPF reinforcements said to have been heading for the capital on Sunday were not known. "We don't know what front they have reached," Millet said.

RPF units have been stationed in Kigali since a peace agreement signed between their movement and the Rwandan government last August.

In Paris, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe called for a "relaunch of the process of dialogue" between the warring parties, and said France would work with the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity to restore order.

Millet said that since Sunday morning, "we have evacuated 392 people in six rotations" between Kigali and Bujumbura in neighbouring Burundi. On Saturday night, 43 French nationals were evacuated to Bangui in the Central African Republic.

"We were told there were 600 French to evacuate, so we should be through soon," he said. But he said between 2,000 and 2,500 other European Union citizens still had to be evacuated as well as non-EU citizens.

A first group of 89 Belgians and 26 Dutch nationals from the Butare region arrived early Monday in Brussels, where Defence Minister Leo Del-

croix said the evacuation of the remaining Belgians should take a week.

The French foreign ministry said some 525 French nationals left Rwanda over the weekend either by air or by road.

Colonel Luc Marchal, commander of the UN troops which had been monitoring a peace accord in Rwanda, said westerners living outside Kigali would be grouped in the capital before being flown to Brussels via Nairobi.

Those who decided to stay would do so "at their own risk," he added.

All Kigali hotels are jam packed with people waiting to be evacuated including some Rwandans. Other people are lying low in their homes. Few dare venture onto the streets, some of which are littered with corpses and the wreckage of looted shops.

There are more than 500 dead bodies at the city mortuary and probably thousands more bodies elsewhere in the capital and in other towns.

The two surgical teams, one from the Belgian Red Cross and the other from the International Committee of the Red Cross were due in Kigali on Monday via neighbouring Burundi.

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