

First judgements in Rwandan genocide next year: report

AFP, December 21, 1994

KIGALI, Dec 21 (AFP) - The international tribunal set up to try those behind this year's genocide in Rwanda could hand down its first judgements in about six months, Rwanda radio said Wednesday quoting the court's chief prosecutor.

It said the tribunal would send arrest warrants to countries where suspects had fled. Complaints would be filed with the UN Security Council over countries that do not respond, the radio said.

The tribunal's top prosecutor, South African judge Richard Goldstone, was interviewed by the radio Tuesday night before he left Rwanda after a two-day visit. He met with President Pasteur Bizimungu and Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu during his stay.

His prosecution team will be based in Kigali and include 170 magistrates who will shortly begin investigations into the deaths of an esti-

mated 500,000 to one million Rwandans in a tribal bloodbath sparked by the April 6 death of President Juvenal Habyarimana in a mysterious plane crash.

Justice Minister Alphonse-Marie Nkubito said the first experts were already here, the radio said.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was set up by the Security Council on November 8, despite opposition from the current Tutsi-dominated Rwandan government. It will have 11 judges of different nationalities, a prosecutor and a clerk.

But the tribunal still has no seat. The new Rwandan government, made up mostly of Tutsi former rebels, wants the tribunal to be in Rwanda but Goldstone prefers it be set up outside the country, perhaps in neighboring Tanzania, sources close to his discussions with the government said.

A UN commission on Rwanda has said the former Hutu-led government was largely to blame for systematic massacres of Tusti tribe members, but added that both sides were responsible for crimes against humanity.

Tutsis are the minority in Rwanda, representing about 15 percent of the population.

The tribunal was to hand down indictments and try defendants accused of acts of genocide and serious violations of international human rights conventions during the period of January 1 and December 31, 1994.

Rwanda was the sole Security Council member that voted against the resolution. The new Kigali government had urged the council to include the death penalty for war crimes, a provision lacking in the UN resolution, and had sought the inves-

tigation of crimes prior going back to 1990.

Diplomats expressed skepticism and said it was unlikely that the tribunal would bring the masterminds of the genocide to justice.

But they stressed that the move would give refugees cramped in border camps an impetus to return to their country. The border camps in eastern Zaire are home to about a million Hutus who fled the victorious minority Tutsi army in July after the genocidal civil war.

Goldstone is also key prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia. He came into the limelight as South Africa's "dirty tricks" judge heading a commission to investigate matters such as clandestine security activities on the part of the former apartheid regime.

mgu-at/ns/nb AFP AFP